



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 292

February Session, 2008

Substitute House Bill No. 5328

House of Representatives, March 31, 2008

The Committee on Energy and Technology reported through REP. FONTANA, S. of the 87th Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING UTILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE COMPLAINTS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) For the purposes of this
2 section, "public service companies" means public service companies, as
3 defined in section 16-1 of the 2008 supplement to the general statutes,
4 with consumers numbering more than fifty thousand or annual gross
5 revenues in excess of fifty million dollars; and "consumer" has the
6 same meaning as provided in subsection (f) of section 16-2a of the
7 general statutes.

8 (b) The Department of Public Utility Control shall track complaints
9 related to services provided by public service companies. The
10 department shall note the number of complaints for each public service
11 company in the following categories and subcategories: (1) High bill
12 complaints, including, but not limited to, rates, estimated bill true-ups
13 and high usage compared to a previous bill or the same period during

14 the preceding year; (2) no bill or low bill; (3) credit and collections,
15 including, but not limited to, payment arrangements, termination,
16 arrearage forgiveness program problems and deposits; (4) other billing
17 issues, including, but not limited to, estimated versus actual billing
18 and meter issues; and (5) quality of service issues, including, but not
19 limited to, installation, repairs, outages, voltage, safety issues and
20 customer service response time. The department may expand the
21 preceding list of categories and subcategories as it deems necessary,
22 upon the request of the Office of Consumer Counsel, the Attorney
23 General or the public service companies.

24 (c) The Department of Public Utility Control shall prepare, at the
25 end of each calendar quarter, a status report detailing the number of
26 complaints received concerning each public service company in each
27 of the categories listed in subsection (b) of this section, the percentage
28 of such complaints that were resolved at the time of reporting and a
29 description of the details of any unresolved complaints, including the
30 issue that led to the complaint and the steps taken to resolve said
31 complaint. The department shall submit such status report to the
32 Office of Consumer Counsel and the Attorney General within ten
33 business days after the end of the quarter for which the report is
34 prepared.

35 (d) Public service companies shall track consumer complaints using
36 those categories and subcategories listed in subsection (b) of this
37 section and provide summaries to the Office of Consumer Counsel, the
38 Attorney General and the Department of Public Utility Control within
39 ten days of the end of the calendar quarter for which the report is
40 generated.

41 (e) The Department of Public Utility Control and public service
42 companies shall provide to the Office of Consumer Counsel and the
43 Attorney General, upon request, all further data and records in their
44 possession related to public service company consumer complaints or
45 bill analysis summaries and the Office of Consumer Counsel and
46 Attorney General may request an investigation into said complaints or

47 bill analysis summaries. Upon such investigation request, the
48 Department of Public Utility Control shall promptly open and conduct
49 a contested case proceeding pursuant to chapter 54 of the general
50 statutes.

51 (f) Twice per year, the Department of Public Utility Control shall
52 initiate uncontested case proceedings with the Office of Consumer
53 Counsel and Attorney General as named participants to review the
54 status reports and consumer complaint summaries described in
55 subsections (c) and (d) of this section.

56 (g) The Office of Consumer Counsel shall have access to adequate
57 staffing, including consumer data analysts, and such other resources as
58 necessary to implement this section.

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|---|---------------------|-------------|
| This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections: | | |
| Section 1 | <i>from passage</i> | New section |

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In subsection (a) of section 1, "as defined in section 16-1 of the 2008 supplement to the general statutes" was added for statutory consistency, "customers" was changed to "consumers" for internal consistency and "and consumer has the same meaning as provided" was added for clarity. In subsection (e) of section 1, "contested docket" was changed to "contested case proceeding" and, in subsection (f) of section 1, "uncontested hearings" was changed to "uncontested case proceedings" for statutory consistency.

ET *Joint Favorable Subst.*

The following fiscal impact statement and bill analysis are prepared for the benefit of members of the General Assembly, solely for the purpose of information, summarization, and explanation, and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose:

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

This bill requires the Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC) to track service complaints regarding utility companies and to prepare quarterly reports on those complaints. It also requires DPUC to provide, upon request, this information to the Office of the Consumer Counsel and the Attorney General. As it is the current practice of DPUC to track complaints and to prepare reports on the utility companies, the bill will have no fiscal impact on the DPUC.

The Out Years

State Impact: None

Municipal Impact: None

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 5328****AN ACT CONCERNING UTILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE COMPLAINTS.****SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the Department of Public Utility Control (DPUC) and large utility companies to track service complaints regarding the companies. It requires DPUC to prepare quarterly reports on the complaints. It requires DPUC and the companies to provide the Office of Consumer Counsel (OCC) and the attorney general (AG), upon request, all further data and records they possess related to utility company consumer complaints or bill analysis summaries.

The bill allows OCC and the AG to request an investigation into the complaints or summaries of bill analyses, and upon such a request, DPUC must promptly open and conduct a contested case proceeding. The bill also requires DPUC to hold twice-yearly uncontested case proceedings with OCC and the AG as named participants to review the status reports and consumer complaint summaries.

The bill entitles OCC “access” to adequate staffing, including consumer data analysts, and other resources needed to implement these provisions.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

TRACKING UTILITY COMPLAINTS

Under the bill, DPUC must track service complaints regarding utilities having more than 50,000 customers or more than \$50 million in annual revenue. These include the state’s electric and gas companies and the larger telecommunications, cable TV, and water companies.

DPUC must note the number of complaints for each company in the following specific categories:

1. high bill complaints, including rates, estimated bill true-ups and high usage compared to a previous bill or the same period during the preceding year;
2. no bill or low bill;
3. credit and collections, including payment arrangements, termination, arrearage forgiveness program problems, and deposits;
4. other billing issues, including estimated versus actual billing and meter issues; and
5. quality of service issues, including installation, repairs, outages, voltage, safety issues, and customer service response time.

DPUC may expand the list of categories as it considers, at the request of OCC, the AG or a company.

Utility companies must track consumer complaints using the same categories and provide summaries to OCC, the AG and DPUC within 10 days of the end of the calendar quarter for which the report is generated.

QUARTERLY REPORTS

The bill requires DPUC to prepare, at the end of each calendar quarter, a status report detailing the number of complaints received concerning each company in each of the listed categories, the percentage of complaints that were resolved at the time of reporting, and a description of the details of any unresolved complaints, including the issue that led to the complaint and the steps taken to resolve it. DPUC must submit the report to OCC and the AG within 10 business days after the end of the quarter for which the report is prepared.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Energy and Technology Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 22 Nay 0 (03/11/2008)