



General Assembly

February Session, 2008

**Raised Bill No. 589**

LCO No. 2770

\* SB00589ET 031108 \*

Referred to Committee on Energy and Technology

Introduced by:  
(ET)

**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A RESIDENTIAL ELECTRIC AND GAS  
CUSTOMER DISCOUNT RATE.**

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

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective October 1, 2008*) (a) As used in this  
2 section, "means tested public benefit" means any assistance that  
3 provides cash, housing, food or medical care, including, but not  
4 limited to, transitional assistance for needy families, supplemental  
5 security income, emergency assistance to the elderly, disabled and  
6 children, food stamps, public housing, federally-subsidized or state-  
7 subsidized housing, the Connecticut energy assistance program,  
8 veterans' benefits, and similar benefits.

9 (b) The Department of Public Utility Control shall require that each  
10 utility company shall provide discounted rates for residential gas and  
11 electric service to low-income customers. The cost of such discounts  
12 shall be included in the rates charged to all other customers of such  
13 utility company. Each utility company shall guarantee payment to the  
14 generation supplier for all power sold to low-income customers at said  
15 discounted rates. Eligibility for the discount rates under this section  
16 shall be established upon verification of a low-income customer's

17 receipt of (1) any means tested public benefit, or (2) verification of  
18 eligibility for the Connecticut energy assistance program, or its  
19 successor program, for which eligibility does not exceed two hundred  
20 per cent of the federal poverty level based on a household's gross  
21 income. The department shall make available to utility companies the  
22 eligibility guidelines for said public benefit programs.

23 (c) The department is hereby directed to increase the low-income  
24 discount eligibility rate from one hundred seventy-five per cent of the  
25 federal poverty level to two hundred per cent of the federal poverty  
26 level. In a program year in which maximum eligibility for the low-  
27 income home energy assistance program, or its successor program,  
28 exceeds two hundred per cent of the federal poverty level, a household  
29 that is income eligible for the Connecticut energy assistance program  
30 shall be eligible for the low-income discount rates required by this  
31 section.

32 (d) A residential customer eligible for the low-income discount rates  
33 shall receive the service on demand, and may return to standard offer  
34 service at any time including from default service. Each utility  
35 company shall periodically notify all customers of the availability of  
36 and method of obtaining the low-income discount rates and standard  
37 offer services. An existing residential customer eligible for low-income  
38 discount on the first day of retail access, who orders service for the first  
39 time from a utility company, shall be offered discounted rates by such  
40 distribution company. A residential customer eligible for the low-  
41 income discount receiving standard offer service shall be allowed to  
42 receive discounted rates upon moving within the service territory of a  
43 utility company.

44 (e) No utility company shall charge any residential customer for  
45 initiating or terminating low-income discount rates, default service, or  
46 standard offer service, when such initiation or termination request is  
47 made after a regular meter reading has occurred and the customer is in  
48 receipt of the results of such reading. A utility company may impose a  
49 reasonable charge, as set by the department through regulations

50 adopted in accordance with subsection (g) of this section, for initiating  
51 or terminating low-income discount rates, default service, or standard  
52 offer service when a customer does not make such an initiation or  
53 termination request upon the receipt of such meter results and prior to  
54 the receipt of the next regularly scheduled meter reading. For purposes  
55 of this subsection, there shall be a regular meter reading conducted of  
56 every residential account no less often than once every two months.  
57 There shall be no charge when the initiation or termination is  
58 involuntary on the part of the customer.

59 (f) Each utility company shall conduct substantial outreach efforts to  
60 make such low-income discount available to eligible customers and  
61 shall report to the department, at least annually, as to its outreach  
62 activities and results.

63 (g) The department shall adopt regulations, in accordance with  
64 chapter 54 of the general statutes, to implement the provisions of this  
65 section, including requiring utility companies to produce information,  
66 in the form of a mailing, or other approved method of distribution, to  
67 their consumers, to inform them of available rebates, discounts, credits  
68 and other cost-saving mechanisms that can help them lower their  
69 monthly utility bills.

70 (h) On or before January 1, 2009, the department shall report, in  
71 accordance with section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint  
72 standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of  
73 matters relating to energy, regarding the cost and benefits of  
74 expanding eligibility for the discount rates established under this  
75 section to any low-income customer who is eligible for any means  
76 tested public benefit for which eligibility does not exceed one hundred  
77 seventy-five per cent of the federal poverty level based on gross  
78 household income. The department shall include any legislative  
79 recommendations necessary to implement this section. The  
80 department shall make recommendations to the General Assembly  
81 relative to the continuation of the low-income discount rate authorized  
82 pursuant to this section or to make modifications thereto. The

83 department shall, in its recommendations, consider whether or not to  
84 modify said discount by establishing a sliding scale low-income  
85 discount program.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
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Section 1	<i>October 1, 2008</i>	New section
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**ET**      *Joint Favorable*