

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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R.O.S.

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DATE: May 5, 1995

(Filing No. S- 117)

UTILITIES AND ENERGY

Reported by: Report B of the Committee.

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**STATE OF MAINE
SENATE
117TH LEGISLATURE
FIRST REGULAR SESSION**

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" to S.P. 149, L.D. 335, Bill, "An Act to Release the Public Utilities Commission from Mandatory Participation in Welfare Programs"

Amend the bill by striking out the title and substituting the following:

'An Act Relating to Mandatory Welfare Programs under the Jurisdiction of the Public Utilities Commission'

Further amend the bill by striking out everything after the enacting clause and before the statement of fact and inserting in its place the following:

'Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA c. 31, sub-c. III-A is enacted to read:

SUBCHAPTER III-A

LOW-INCOME ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

§3160. Definitions

As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings.

1. Low-income program. "Low-income program" means any program that the commission by rule or order, pursuant to section 3152, subsection 1, paragraph C or section 3153-A, subsection 1, paragraph G or pursuant to any other provision of law, has required an electric utility to implement and that is designed to assist low-income customers in paying their electric bills. "Low-income program" does not mean any rule or order regulating winter disconnection of utility service.

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2. Total benefits. "Total benefits" means the annual aggregate of all benefits actually granted to an electric utility's customers under a low-income program.

§3161. Cap on benefits; 1994 reference year

The commission may not require an electric utility to implement a low-income program in which the total benefits exceeds .5% of the utility's 1994 jurisdictional revenues, as defined by the commission by rule or order.

Sec. 2. Commission review. Within available resources, the commission shall undertake a review of electric utility low-income programs. The review must include consideration of the appropriateness of requiring some but not all electric utilities to implement low-income programs, particularly in light of the emerging competitive electric market. The commission shall also examine the effectiveness and accountability of electric utility low-income programs in comparison to other methods of meeting the needs of low-income utility customers. The commission shall develop proposals for phasing out electric utility low-income programs and transferring the responsibility for meeting low-income customer needs to State Government agencies. The commission shall complete its study and make a report on its findings and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over utility matters by January 1, 1996.'

Further amend the bill by inserting at the end before the statement of fact the following:

FISCAL NOTE

The Public Utilities Commission will incur some minor additional costs to develop rules pertaining to low-income assistance programs of electric utilities and to conduct the required study. These costs can be absorbed within the commission's existing budgeted resources.'

STATEMENT OF FACT

This amendment, which is one of 2 minority reports of the Joint Standing Committee on Utilities and Energy, strikes and replaces the bill. Under this amendment, electric utility low-income program benefits are capped at .5% of the utility's 1994 revenues. This amendment also requires the Public Utilities Commission to undertake a review of electric utility low-income programs to evaluate the appropriateness of requiring some

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COMMITTEE AMENDMENT "A" to S.P. 149, L.D. 335

2 but not all electric utilities to implement low-income programs,
particularly in light of the emerging competitive electric
4 market. The commission must also review the effectiveness and
accountability of electric utility low-income programs. The
6 commission is required to develop proposals for transferring the
responsibility for meeting low-income customer needs to State
Government. The commission's report is due January 1, 1996.
8 This amendment also adds a fiscal note.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENT