



ICC Raises Awareness About New Consumer Protections for Low-Income Electric and Natural Gas Utility Customers

Springfield, IL – The Illinois Commerce Commission wants low-income customers struggling to afford their electric and natural gas utility bills to be aware of changes in state law that offer relief from deposit and late payment fees, and clarifies who is eligible for these new consumer protection benefits.

“Late payment fees and deposits for service or reconnection can be barriers to affordability for low-income customers who are already finding it difficult to pay their utility bills, putting access to essential utility services farther out-of-reach for some residential customers. Removing these fees and deposits will make it easier for low-income customers to better manage their utility bills and stay connected,” said Jim Agnew, Director, ICC Consumer Services Division.

The Illinois General Assembly added sections 8-201.7 and 8-201.8 to the Public Utilities Act as part of the recently enacted Climate and Equitable Jobs Act. CEJA puts Illinois on the path to reach net zero emissions by 2050; invest in training a diverse workforce; institutes key ratepayer and residential customer protections and prioritizes meaningful ethics and transparency reforms. Under the new law now in effect:

- Electric utilities are prohibited from charging late-payment fees or charges to low income customers.
- Electric and gas utilities are prohibited from requiring low income customers. to pay a deposit to have service connected, reconnected or to continue to receive service. Gas and electric utilities must also refund deposits to low-income customers who have paid them.

The law defines a low-income customers as (i) a member of a household at or below 80% of the community or county median household income; (ii) a member of a household at or below 150% of the federal poverty level; (iii) a person who is eligible for the Illinois Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); (iv) a person who is eligible to participate in the Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP or PIP Plan); or (v) a person who is eligible to receive Lifeline telephone service (free or discounted telephone service available to low-income people).

If you qualify and have been charged a late-payment fee on a recent electric bill, you should contact your electric utility first to find out whether the fee can be removed off your bill. Similarly, low-income customers who have been charged a deposit by their electric or natural gas utility to have service connected, reconnected or to continue to receive service should contact the utility first to find out whether the deposit can be refunded.

The ICC’s Consumer Services Division has English and Spanish speaking counselors available to help customers needing further assistance between 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday by calling 1-800-524-0795, 1-217-782-2024 outside the State of Illinois, or TTY at 1-800-858-9277. If you are interested in filing a complaint against your utility online click [here](#). Struggling to pay your utility bill? Visit the ICC utility assistance webpage to learn more about resources that may be available to you.

