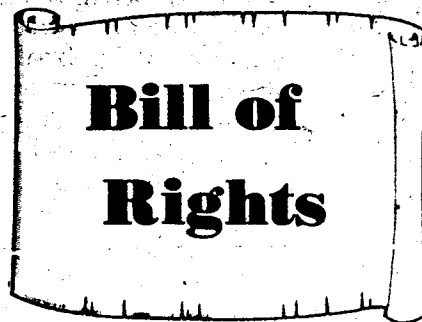


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Utility Consumer



1. The bill provides for service to all applicants, provided that such applicants are either current in their bills, agree to pay past charges or have the bill guaranteed by the Department of Social Services. Service must be provided promptly, and if denied, the reasons for denial must be provided within 3 days unless there are extenuating circumstances.
2. The bill specifies preliminary termination of service procedures and provides for a personal visit notice as well as special protections for those 62 or older, the handicapped and those who are ill.
3. Disconnection of heat-related gas and electric service during the cold-weather period without first contacting an adult resident at the residence at least 72 hours prior to shutoff is prohibited.
4. The bill provides special protection to tenants of multiple-dwellings whereby any tenant is permitted to pay bills and thereby avoid termination.
5. A person receiving public assistance may not be denied service from a utility if the local Department of Social Services agrees to pay the utility.
6. Security deposits may be eliminated for all but delinquent customers and only be imposed again if the Public Service Commission finds that the economic benefit of maintaining deposits exceeds the costs to the utility.
7. Persons behind in bill payments may be permitted to pay their debt on a deferred schedule. If an agreement is not reached with the utility, the customer may appeal to the PSC to help arrange the terms of repayment.
8. Customers have the right to budget billings; that is, monthly payments would be averaged over the year so that large bills would not be received during periods of heavy home-heating usage and small bills at other times of the year.
9. The bill provides that estimated bills can only be sent for a maximum of four months, after which the utility must gather true readings and send an actual bill.
10. The bill provides that a customer may designate a third party, such as a friend or relative, to be sent copies of all utility notices as a protection for the elderly or the handicapped.
11. The bill provides for finality of billing by mandating that: (a) A utility could not send an original bill after six months from the date of service, unless the failure to bill earlier was not due to the utility's own neglect; and (b) A utility could not adjust a bill upwards after 12 months from the date of service, unless its failure to charge the proper amount was due to the customer's conduct.
12. The bill provides that the PSC must establish regulations for procedures to handle complaints and claims, including those for a final appeal to the Commission.
13. The bill provides for bilingual billing in counties where 20% or more of the customers speak a language other than English.
14. At the initiation of service, and at least once a year thereafter, all customers will be informed in writing of their rights and obligations, including the right to avail themselves of assistance from the PSC in disputes with a utility.
15. The bill provides that the PSC shall maintain an emergency "hot line" for customers to contact between the hours of 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. in case of serious problems with respect to utility service.

Signed,
Gov. Hugh Carey