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HOUSE BILL NO. 841

Offered January 12, 2022

Prefiled January 12, 2022

A *BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 3.2 of Title 44 a section numbered 44-146.29.4, relating to disaster or emergency; disconnection prohibitions for certain utilities.*

Patron—Lopez

Referred to Committee on Public Safety

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 3.2 of Title 44 a section numbered 44-146.29:4 as follows:

§ 44-146.29:4. Disconnection prohibition for certain utilities.

A. In the case of any "state of emergency," "emergency," "major disaster," "disaster," or "resource shortage," as these terms are defined in § 44-146.16, declared by the Governor or by federal, state, or local officials, each utility that is (i) engaged in the business of furnishing electricity, gas, water, or wastewater services and (ii) subject to the regulation of the State Corporation Commission or owned or operated by a municipality shall be prohibited from disconnecting service to residential customers for nonpayment of bills or fees until 60 days after the sooner of either of the following: (a) the Governor or state or local officials determine that conditions have improved such that the prohibition need no longer be in place or (b) the declared state of emergency, emergency, major disaster, disaster, or resource shortage has ended.

B. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, upon the declaration of a "local emergency," as that term is defined in § 44-146.16, each utility identified in subsection A shall be prohibited from disconnecting service to residential customers for nonpayment of bills or fees in the area affected by a local emergency within its service territory until 60 days after the sooner of either of the following: (i) state or local officials determine that conditions have improved such that the prohibition need no longer be in place or (ii) the declared local emergency ends.

C. Each utility subject to this section shall notify its customers who are at least 30 days in arrears about this prohibition on disconnections by certain utilities. Such notice may be included as a bill insert or separate notice.

INTRODUCED

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