

NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRC Extends the Utility Disconnections of Residential Customers Moratorium

Santa Fe, NM - The PRC at its open meeting held October 21st adopted a final rule change that revises three rules pertaining to disconnection of residential gas, electric, and water. This allows the Commission to issue subsequent temporary orders prohibiting disconnection of residential utility customers in New Mexico during any public health emergency.

During the meeting, the Commission approved the subsequent second temporary Order that extends the moratorium on disconnections of residential utility customers until January 6, 2021.

In light of the on-going public health emergency the PRC will evaluate the moratorium regularly. In this instance, as with all work the Commission does, it must find the public interest balance of New Mexican ratepayers facing difficulty paying bills with the needs of utilities, large and small, to maintain operations. The Commission is committed to helping the state pass through these difficult times.

During the discussion prior to adopting a final rule change, Commissioner Valerie Espinoza commented that she's ready to implement the rule change since there's not much more to consider. During the public hearing Commissioner Valerie Espinoza said, "I think the information that has been given here is very useful. I wish we could have heard from more people. I'm very interested in hearing about the moratorium information. It's important because it's impacting these businesses – their debt is growing, and I'd like to hear from all of them and the consumers that have been impacted by it, too."

Commissioner Jefferson Byrd expressed his concern for small rural electric cooperatives: "I do believe these smaller companies have legitimate concerns. They expect these bills to be paid monthly, to pay for their salary and materials needed to keep their utility in operation and they're running out of cash flow, as well. Giving them the option to contact rate payers, or nonpayers and work out a payment plan, I think is a good thing... sometimes just getting \$20, \$25 from them helps keep the company whole and that's another thing we have to consider. Some of these small companies don't have a big pool of cash and they rely on that monthly bill to operate the company. I want to make sure that we're not forgetting the little guy while we're making these rules and make it so that every company is made whole and not allowed to collapse because of a rule that we make."

Chair Commissioner Fischmann also stated: "I share Commissioner Byrd's concerns and I just want to make sure that we're flexible enough in the orders that if utilities are about to go under that we could provide some relief."

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