

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 986
By: Price
State Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

It has been noted that advanced metering and meter information networks have been deployed in approximately seven million homes in the ERCOT power region in Texas, providing customers with cost savings and operational benefits including enhanced energy management tools and faster outage response times. It has been further noted that, although ERCOT utilities are explicitly permitted to recover costs associated with the deployment of these meters and networks, there is ambiguity as to whether non-ERCOT utilities such as Xcel Energy's Southwestern Public Service Company would similarly be able to recover the costs associated with deploying advanced meters and meter information networks. H.B. 986 seeks to explicitly authorize certain non-ERCOT electric utilities to recover those costs.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 986 amends the Utilities Code to authorize an investor-owned electric utility operating solely outside of ERCOT that does not exceed a certain transmission capacity threshold and that elects to deploy advanced metering and meter information networks to recover reasonable and necessary costs incurred in deploying those networks. The bill requires such a utility to deploy the network as rapidly as practicable to allow customers to better manage energy use and control costs and subjects such a utility to certain Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) rules relating to metering and billing services. The bill requires the PUC to ensure that any deployment plan approved under the bill's provisions and any related customer surcharge are not applicable to customer accounts that receive service at transmission voltage and are consistent with the PUC rules related to advanced metering systems regarding customer protections, data security, data privacy, data ownership, and options given consumers to continue to receive service through a non-advanced meter.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2019.