

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
81R36487 E

C.S.H.B. 1822  
By: Solomons et al. (Fraser)  
Business & Commerce  
5/22/2009  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Utility bills are complex and difficult for consumers to understand. However, certain elements are common to every phone and electric bill. Each retail entity should label these line items on the bill the same way and each retail entity should base these labeled items on the same "definition" of the term.

C.S.H.B. 1822 amends the Utilities Code to require the Public Utility Commission of Texas to define common terms used by certificated telecommunications utilities, retail electric providers, and electric utilities in retail bills.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Public Utility Commission of Texas in SECTION 3 (Section 17.102, Utilities Code) of this bill.

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the Public Utility Commission of Texas is modified in SECTION 1 (Section 17.003, Utilities Code) of this bill.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Section 17.003(c), Utilities Code, to require that the rules include a list of defined terms common to the telecommunications and electricity industries and require that applicable terms be labeled uniformly in each contract and on each retail bill sent to a residential or small commercial customer by a certificated telecommunications utility, retail electric provider, or electric utility to facilitate consumer understanding of relevant billing elements.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 17.004(a), Utilities Code, to entitle all buyers of telecommunications and retail electric services to bills presented in a clear, readable format and easy-to-understand language that uses defined terms as required by Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) rules adopted under Section 17.003 (Customer Awareness), Utilities Code.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 17.102, Utilities Code, as follows:

Sec. 17.102. RULES RELATING TO CHOICE. Requires PUC to adopt and enforce rules that ensure that every service provider submitting charges on the bill is clearly and easily identified on the bill along with its services, products, and charges, using defined terms as required by PUC rules adopted under Section 17.003.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 17.151(a), Utilities Code, to authorize a service provider, retail electric provider, or billing agent to submit charges for a new product or service to be billed on a customer's telephone or retail electric bill on or after the effective date of this section only if the service provider, retail electric provider, or billing agent uses defined terms on the bill and in contracts for residential and small commercial customers as required by PUC rules adopted under Section 17.003.

SECTION 5. Requires PUC to adopt rules consistent with this Act not later than December 1, 2009.

SECTION 6. Effective date: September 1, 2009.