

1 WHEREAS, presently there is no vaccine to protect against COVID-19, there is a
2 high probability of widespread exposure, and the disease poses an imminent threat to
3 Louisiana citizens; and

4 WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), "older adults and
5 those with severe underlying chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, lung disease,
6 or diabetes seem to be at a higher risk for developing more serious complications from the
7 COVID-19 illness"; and

8 WHEREAS, the CDC recommends people wash their hands often with soap and
9 water for at least twenty seconds, especially after they have been in a public place, or after
10 blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing and also recommends the use of detergent to keep
11 items clean; and

12 WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, President Donald J. Trump declared a national
13 emergency over the COVID-19 Coronavirus outbreak; and

14 WHEREAS, as of March 16, 2020, Louisiana reports 114 COVID-19 cases and two
15 deaths from the virus; and

16 WHEREAS, the Public Service Commission is charged with ensuring a regulatory
17 balance that enables utilities to provide customers with safe, adequate, and reliable services,
18 at rates that are just, reasonable, equitable, and economically efficient; and

19 WHEREAS, the Public Service Commission has jurisdiction over publicly owned
20 utilities providing electric, water, waste water, natural gas, and telecommunications services;
21 and

22 WHEREAS, in the interest of protecting public health, the Public Service
23 Commission should temporarily suspend disconnection of electric or gas service to
24 residential customers for nonpayment; and

25 WHEREAS, the impact of the coronavirus in the state could cause economic
26 suffering for many, specifically those who become sick or are forced to miss work, which
27 also may ultimately result in job loss; and

28 WHEREAS, utility companies in New York agreed to a no-disconnect policy at the
29 request of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Department of Public Service;
30 and

1 WHEREAS, major private water companies in New York also agreed to suspend
2 shut-offs during the pandemic; and

3 WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the West Virginia Public Service Commission
4 urged all public utility companies in the state to suspend service terminations effective
5 immediately, with exceptions for safety and customer requests; and

6 WHEREAS, in the past, when Louisiana has experienced severe temperatures during
7 both the winter summer months, electric and gas companies suspended service terminations
8 for nonpayment in the interest of public safety and health; and

9 WHEREAS, similar actions were taken after Hurricane Katrina impacted Louisiana;
10 and

11 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has already created financial burdens for
12 many residents of Louisiana and those burdens may continue increasing for the
13 disadvantaged; and

14 WHEREAS, suspending utility disconnections and decreasing the financial impact
15 that residents may face will alleviate much of the inevitable financial stress that will result
16 from the COVID-19 Coronavirus; and

17 WHEREAS, in the interest of public safety and preventing the spread of COVID-19
18 and given the severity of the COVID-19 Coronavirus and the uncertainty surrounding the
19 impact it may have on Louisiana residents, the Public Service Commission should prohibit
20 the suspension of utility services to ensure that those enduring financial strain and those
21 members of disadvantaged communities will not have concerns about keeping critical utility
22 services connected.

23 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby
24 urge and request the Public Service Commission to prohibit energy and water companies
25 from disconnecting utility services for a period of three months.

26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the
27 secretary of the Public Service Commission.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

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James

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