

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 148

BY SENATORS BARROW AND ALLAIN

A RESOLUTION

To create the Utility Assistance Coordination Task Force to study and make recommendations regarding coordination of utility assistance programs in the state.

WHEREAS, many Louisiana households, including older adults, persons with disabilities, families with young children, and households with low or fixed incomes, experience difficulty paying utility bills, particularly during extreme weather, major storms, economic hardship, or other emergencies; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana residents may seek help through a variety of assistance programs, including but not limited to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), crisis assistance, weatherization assistance, utility sponsored assistance programs, nonprofit and faith-based assistance, local government programs, and referral services; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana had approximately sixty-two million three hundred seventy thousand five hundred dollars in funding available through LIHEAP in fiscal year 2024 and served a total of ninety-three thousand six hundred forty-five households; and

WHEREAS, in Louisiana, over five hundred thousand households were income-eligible for LIHEAP in fiscal year 2024, meaning that approximately one in six eligible households received assistance; and

WHEREAS, multiple energy bill assistance programs may operate simultaneously, including LIHEAP, utility-sponsored assistance, nonprofit fuel funds, crisis assistance, arrearage management, and related customer support programs, and coordination among program administrators may improve access, reduce duplication, and better reduce household energy burdens; and

WHEREAS, public and private partners working hand- in- hand could help Louisiana households more easily identify available assistance, reduce barriers to access, improve the timeliness and effectiveness of assistance delivery, and maximize the impact of federal, state, and local assistance resources; and

WHEREAS, national guidance recommends coordination in program design, intake,

customer data collection, benefit interaction review, leveraging administrative resources, and regular communication among policymakers and program administrators; and

WHEREAS, a thorough review of Louisiana's utility assistance landscape would help identify opportunities to improve outreach, streamline referrals, reduce disconnections, and strengthen the effectiveness of available public, private, and charitable assistance.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby create the Utility Assistance Coordination Task Force, hereinafter referred to in this Resolution as the "task force", to study and make recommendations regarding coordination of utility assistance programs in this state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall consider and make recommendations concerning all of the following matters:

(1) An inventory of utility assistance programs available to Louisiana households, including federal, state, utility-sponsored, and nonprofit assistance programs.

(2) Opportunities to improve coordination of intake, referrals, eligibility verification, customer communications, vendor payments, and program outreach.

(3) Opportunities to reduce unnecessary duplication, address gaps in assistance, and improve interactions among bill assistance, arrearage management, disconnection prevention, and related energy assistance programs.

(4) Opportunities to improve access to assistance for vulnerable households, including seniors, persons with disabilities, households with young children, and households facing acute energy burdens.

(5) Any legislation, administrative action, action by the Public Service Commission, memoranda of understanding, or other policy changes necessary to improve coordination of utility assistance programs in Louisiana.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall be composed of the following fourteen members:

(1) One member of the Senate appointed by the chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and International Affairs.

(2) One member appointed by the chairman of the Louisiana Public Service Commission.

(3) One member appointed by the secretary of the Department of Conservation and Energy.

(4) One member appointed by Entergy Corporation.

(5) One member appointed by Cleco Power LLC.

(6) One member appointed by Southwestern Electric Power Company.

(7) One member appointed by Atmos Energy Corporation.

(8) One member appointed jointly by Delta North Louisiana Gas Company, LLC and Delta South Louisiana Gas Company, LLC.

(9) One member appointed by the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives.

(10) One member appointed by the Louisiana Energy Power Authority.

(11) One member appointed by the Louisiana Housing Corporation.

(12) One member appointed by the Association of Community Action Partnership.

(13) One member appointed by the Louisiana Council on Aging Directors Association.

(14) One member appointed by the Louisiana Association of United Way.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that each designating authority shall submit the name of its appointee to the chairman of the Louisiana Public Service Commission, or his designee, no later than August 1, 2026.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall convene its first meeting no later than September 1, 2026, at the call of the chairman of the Louisiana Public Service Commission, or his designee, and, at its first meeting, the members shall elect a chairman, vice chairman, and any other officers the task force deems necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Public Service Commission shall provide administrative support to the task force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a majority of the members of the task force shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business and that any official action of the task force shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the members present.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the members of the task force shall serve without compensation, except per diem or expenses reimbursement to which they may be individually entitled as members of their constituent organizations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall submit a written report of its findings and recommendations no later than March 1, 2027, to the Louisiana Public Service Commission, the House Committee on Commerce, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection and International Affairs, the Louisiana Housing Corporation, and the David R. Poynter Legislative Research Library as required by R.S. 24:771 and 772.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force shall terminate on the date of the submission of its report or March 1, 2027, whichever occurs first.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Louisiana Public Service Commission, the secretary of the Department of Conservation and Energy, the executive director of the Louisiana Housing Corporation, and each entity with appointment authority under this Resolution, including Entergy Corporation, Cleco Power LLC, Southwestern Electric Power Company, Atmos Energy Corporation, Delta North Louisiana Gas Company, LLC, Delta South Louisiana Gas Company, LLC, the Association of Louisiana Electric Cooperatives, the Louisiana Energy Power Authority, the Association of Community Action Partnership, the Louisiana Council on Aging Directors Association, and the Louisiana Association of United Way.

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PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE