

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2015

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SENATE DRS25153-TD-14 (02/09)

Short Title: Cap/Clarify Utility Rate Mechanisms.

(Public)

Sponsors: Senator Rucho (Primary Sponsor).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO CAP AND SUNSET THE RATE ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM FOR
3 NATURAL GAS DISTRIBUTION COMPANIES FOR PIPELINE SAFETY COSTS AND
4 TO CLARIFY THE RATE ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM FOR WATER AND SEWER
5 FACILITIES.

6 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

7 **SECTION 1.** G.S. 62-133.7A reads as rewritten:

8 "**§ 62-133.7A. Rate adjustment mechanism for natural gas local distribution company**
9 **rates.**

10 (a) In setting rates for a natural gas local distribution company in a general rate case
11 proceeding under G.S. 62-133, the Commission may adopt, implement, modify, or eliminate a
12 rate adjustment mechanism to enable the company to recover the reasonable and prudently
13 incurred capital investment and associated costs of complying with federal gas pipeline safety
14 requirements, including a return based on the company's then authorized return. Costs incurred
15 for routine maintenance, repair, and replacement of system components shall not be included in
16 a rate adjustment mechanism authorized under this section.The Commission shall adopt,
17 implement, modify, or eliminate a rate adjustment mechanism authorized under this section
18 only upon a finding by the Commission that the mechanism is in the public interest. The
19 Commission may eliminate or modify any rate adjustment mechanism authorized pursuant to
20 this section upon a finding that it is not in the public interest.

21 (b) The Commission shall provide for audit and reconciliation procedures, including
22 measures for refunds of any overcollections under the adjustment mechanism with interest
23 pursuant to G.S. 62-130(e).

24 (c) Annual costs recovered under a rate adjustment mechanism authorized under this
25 section shall not exceed four percent (4%) of the total base margin approved by the
26 Commission in the Company's last general rate case. A rate adjustment mechanism authorized
27 under this section shall terminate the earlier of the company's next general rate case or four
28 years after the adoption of the mechanism by the Commission."

29 **SECTION 2.** G.S. 133.12 reads as rewritten:

30 "**§ 62-133.12. Rate adjustment mechanism based on investment in repair, improvement,**
31 **and replacement of water and sewer facilities.**

32 (a) The Commission may approve a rate adjustment mechanism in a general rate
33 proceeding pursuant to G.S. 62-133 to allow a water or sewer public utility to recover through a
34 system improvement charge the incremental depreciation expense and capital costs associated
35 with the utility's reasonable and prudently incurred investment in eligible water and sewer
36 system ~~improvements~~improvement projects. The Commission shall approve a rate adjustment



1 mechanism authorized by this section only upon a finding that the mechanism is in the public
2 interest. The frequency and manner of rate adjustments under the mechanism shall be as
3 prescribed by the Commission. For the purposes of this section, "improvement projects" means
4 unique, temporary endeavors that are beyond the scope of normal operations of the water or
5 sewer utility.

6 (b) For purposes of this section, "eligible water system ~~improvements~~improvement
7 projects" or "eligible sewer system ~~improvements~~improvement projects" shall include only
8 those ~~improvements~~improvement projects found necessary by the Commission to enable the
9 water or sewer utility to provide safe, reliable, and efficient service in accordance with
10 applicable water quality and effluent standards.

11 (c) For purposes of this section, "eligible water system ~~improvements~~improvement
12 projects" means:

- 13 (1) ~~Distribution~~In kind replacements of distribution system mains,
14 hydropneumatic storage tanks, valves, utility service lines (including meter
15 boxes and appurtenances), meters, and hydrants installed as in-kind
16 replacements.~~hydrants.~~
- 17 (2) Main extensions installed to eliminate dead ends and to implement solutions
18 to regional water supply in order to comply with primary and, upon specific
19 Commission approval, secondary drinking water standards.
- 20 (3) Equipment and infrastructure installed to comply with primary drinking
21 water standards.
- 22 (4) Equipment and infrastructure installed at the direction of the Commission to
23 comply with secondary drinking water standards.
- 24 (5) ~~Unreimbursed costs of relocating facilities~~Facility relocations due to
25 highway construction or relocation projects.

26 (d) For the purposes of this section, "eligible sewer system ~~improvements~~improvement
27 projects" means:

- 28 (1) Collection main extensions installed to ~~implement solutions to~~ alternative
29 wastewater ~~problems~~treatment facilities.
- 30 (2) Improvements necessary to ~~reduce inflow and infiltration to the collection~~
31 ~~system~~ to comply with applicable State and federal law and
32 ~~regulations~~regulations regarding inflow and infiltration to collection system.
- 33 (3) ~~Unreimbursed costs of relocating facilities~~Facility relocations due to
34 highway construction or relocation projects.
- 35 (4) ~~Pumps, motors, blowers, and other mechanical equipment installed as~~
36 ~~in-kind replacements for customers.~~Replacements of collection system
37 duplex pump stations, including pumps, controls, electrical and related
38 equipment.

39 (e) The Commission shall provide for audit and reconciliation procedures, including
40 measures for refunds of any over-collections under the system improvement charge with
41 interest pursuant to G.S. 62-130(e).

42 (f) The Commission may eliminate or modify any rate adjustment mechanism
43 authorized pursuant to this section upon a finding that it is not in the public interest.

44 (g) Cumulative system improvement charges for a water or sewer utility pursuant to a
45 rate adjustment mechanism approved by the Commission under this section may not exceed
46 five percent (5%) of the total annual service revenues approved by the Commission in the water
47 or sewer utility's last general rate case."

48 **SECTION 3.** This act is effective July 1, 2015, and applies to rate adjustment
49 mechanism adopted after that date.