

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE
2019 FIRST EXTRAORDINARY SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 117

BY DELEGATES HANSHAW (MR. SPEAKER) AND MILEY

BY REQUEST OF THE EXECUTIVE

[Introduced May 20, 2019]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §11-13-3f of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended; to
 2 amend and reenact §11-13F-1, §11-13F-2 and §11-13F-3 of said code; to amend and
 3 reenact §11-24-11 of said code; to amend and reenact §24-2A-5 of said code; and to
 4 amend and reenact §24-3-2 of said code, all relating to reduced rates for low-income
 5 residential customers of privately owned sewer and combined water and sewer utilities;
 6 providing for application for reduced rates; updating definitions; authorizing certain tax
 7 credits for cost of using reduced rates; and providing for retroactive effective date.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

CHAPTER 11. TAXATION.

ARTICLE 13. BUSINESS AND OCCUPATION TAX.

§11-13-3f. Tax credit for reducing electric, natural gas or water utility rates for low-income residential customers; regulations.

1 (a) There shall be allowed as a credit against the tax imposed
 2 by this article, the cost of providing electric or natural gas or water utility service, or any
 3 combination of electric, natural gas or water utility services, at reduced rates to qualified low-
 4 income residential customers which has not been reimbursed by any other means.

5 (b) For tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2019, there shall be allowed as a credit
 6 against the tax imposed by this article, the cost of providing sewer service or sewer and water
 7 service at reduced rates to qualified low-income residential customers which has not been
 8 reimbursed by any other means.

9 ~~(b)~~ (c) The tax commissioner may prescribe such regulations as may be necessary to
 10 carry out the purposes of this section, of §11-13F-1 *et seq.* of this code and of §11-24-11 of this
 11 code.

ARTICLE 13F. BUSINESS AND OCCUPATION TAX CREDIT FOR REDUCING ELECTRIC, AND NATURAL GAS, WATER, AND SEWER UTILITY RATES FOR

LOW-INCOME RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS.

§11-13F-1. Legislative Purpose.

1 In order to reimburse public utilities for the revenue deficiencies that they incur in providing
2 special reduced electric or natural gas, ~~or~~ water, or sewer utility rates to low-income residential
3 customers in accordance with the provisions of §24-2A-1 *et seq.* of this code, there is hereby
4 provided a business and occupation tax credit for reducing electric, natural gas, ~~or~~ water, or sewer
5 utility rates for low-income residential customers.

§11-13F-2. Definitions.

1 (a) Any term used in this article shall have the same meaning as when used in a
2 comparable context in §11-13-1 *et seq.* of this code, unless a different meaning is clearly required
3 by the context of its use or by definition in this article.

4 (b) For purposes of this article, the term:

5 (1) "Eligible taxpayer" means a utility which has provided electric or natural gas service,
6 or both electric and natural gas service; or water or sewer service, or both water and sewer
7 service, to qualified low-income residential customers at special reduced rates.

8 (2) "Cost of providing ~~electric or natural gas~~ utility service ~~or both~~ at special reduced rates"
9 means the amount certified by the Public Service Commission under the provisions of ~~section~~
10 ~~three, article two-a, chapter twenty-four~~ §24-2A-2 of this code as the revenue deficiency incurred
11 by a public utility in providing special reduced rates for electric, ~~or~~ natural gas, sewer, or water
12 utility service as required by §24-2A-1 or approved pursuant to §24-2A-5 of this code.

13 (3) "Special reduced rates" means the rates ordered by the Public Service Commission
14 under the authority of §24-2A-1 or §24-2A-5 of this code.

15 (4) "Qualified low-income residential customers" means those utility customers eligible to
16 receive electric, ~~or~~ natural gas, water, or sewer utility service, ~~or both,~~ under special reduced
17 rates.

§11-13F-3. Amount of credit.

1 (a) There shall be allowed to any eligible taxpayer a credit against the business and
 2 occupation taxes imposed by §11-13-1 *et seq.* of this code, for reducing electric and natural gas
 3 utility rates. The amount of the credit available to any eligible taxpayer shall be equal to its cost
 4 of providing electric or natural gas service, or both, at special reduced rates as certified by the
 5 Public Service Commission under the provisions of §24-2A-2 of this code to qualified residential
 6 customers, less any reimbursement of said cost which the taxpayer has received through any
 7 other means.

8 (b) For tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2019, there shall be allowed to any
 9 eligible taxpayer a credit against the business and occupation taxes imposed by §11-13-1 *et seq.*
 10 of this code, for reducing rates for providing electric, natural gas, sewer or water service, or any
 11 combination of electric, natural gas, water or sewer services. The amount of the credit available
 12 to any eligible taxpayer shall be equal to its cost of providing utility service at special reduced
 13 rates to qualified residential customers, less any reimbursement of said cost which the taxpayer
 14 has received through any other means.

ARTICLE 24. CORPORATION NET INCOME TAX.

§11-24-11. Credit for reducing electric or natural gas or water utility rates for low-income residential customers.

1 (a) *General.* -- A credit shall be allowed against the primary
 2 tax liability of an eligible taxpayer under this article for the cost of providing electric or
 3 natural gas or water utility service, or any combination of electric, natural gas or water utility
 4 services, at special reduced rates to qualified low-income residential customers which has not
 5 been reimbursed by any other means.

6 (b) *Definitions.* -- For purposes of this section, the term:

7 (1) "Eligible taxpayer" means a utility which has provided electric, ~~or~~ natural gas, ~~or~~ water,
 8 or sewer utility service, or any combination of electric, natural gas, ~~or~~ water, or sewer utility
 9 services, to qualified low-income residential customers at special reduced rates.

10 (2) "Cost of providing electric or natural gas or water or sewer utility service, or any
11 combination of electric, or natural gas, or water, or sewer utility services, at special reduced rates"
12 means the amount certified by the Public Service Commission under the provisions of §24-2A-2
13 of this code, as the revenue deficiency incurred by a public utility in providing special reduced
14 rates for electric or natural gas or water or sewer utility service, or any combination of electric,
15 natural gas or water or sewer utility services, as required by §24-2A-1 of this code or authorized
16 by §24-2A-5 of this code.

17 (3) "Special reduced rates" means the rates ordered or approved by the Public Service
18 Commission under the authority of §24-2A-1 or §24-2A-5 of this code.

19 (4) "Qualified low-income residential customers" means those utility customers eligible to
20 receive electric, or natural gas, or water or sewer utility service, or any combination of electric,
21 natural gas, or water or sewer utility services, under special reduced rates.

22 (c) *Amount of credit.* —

23 (1) For tax years beginning prior to January 1, 2019, the amount of the credit available to
24 any eligible taxpayer shall be equal to its cost of providing electric, or natural gas, or water utility
25 service, or any combination of electric, natural gas, or water utility services, at special reduced
26 rates to qualified residential customers, less any reimbursement of said cost which the taxpayer
27 has received through any other means.

28 (2) For tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2019, the amount of the credit available
29 to any eligible taxpayer shall be equal to its cost of providing electric, or natural gas, or water or
30 sewer utility service, or any combination of electric, natural gas, water or sewer utility services, at
31 special reduced rates to qualified residential customers, less any reimbursement of said cost
32 which the taxpayer has received through any other means.

33 (d) *When credit may be taken.* -- An eligible taxpayer may claim a credit allowed under
34 this section on its annual return for the taxable year in which it receives certification of the amount
35 of its revenue deficiency from the Public Service Commission.

36 Notwithstanding the provisions of §11-24-16 of this code to the contrary, no credit may be
37 claimed on any declaration of estimated tax filed for such taxable year prior to July 1 of such
38 taxable year. Such credit may be claimed on a declaration or amended declaration filed on or
39 after that date but only if the amount certified will not be recovered by application of the business
40 and occupation tax credit allowed by §11-13-3f of this code. In such event, only that amount not
41 recovered by that credit may be considered or taken as a credit when estimating the tax due under
42 this article. In no event may the eligible taxpayer recover more than 100 percent of its revenue
43 deficiency as certified by the Public Service Commission.

44 (e) *Application of credit.* -- The credit allowable by this section for a taxable year is not
45 subject to the 50 percent limitation specified in §11-24-9 of this code. Notwithstanding the
46 provisions of §11-13F-4 of this code, any unused credit may be carried over and applied against
47 business and occupation taxes in the manner specified in §11-13F-5 of this code.

48 (f) *Copy of certification order.* -- A copy of a certification order from the Public Service
49 Commission shall be attached to any annual return under this article on which a credit allowed by
50 this section is taken.

**ARTICLE 2A. REDUCED RATES FOR LOW-INCOME RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS
OF ELECTRICITY, NATURAL GAS, WATER, OR SEWER.**

**§24-2A-5. Special rates for certain water, sewer, or combined water and sewer utility
customers.**

1 (a) The commission may authorize a privately owned water, sewer or combined water and
2 sewer utility to voluntarily implement a rate design featuring reduced rates and charges for service
3 for residential utility customers receiving:

- 4 (1) Social Security Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
5 (2) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);
6 (3) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families-Unemployed Parent Program (TANF-UP);or

7 (4) Assistance from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) if they are
8 sixty years of age or older.

9 (b) The special reduced rate offered by each water, sewer, or combined water and sewer
10 utility to its eligible customers shall be a percentage less, which shall be approved by the
11 commission, than the rate that would be applicable to such customers if they were not receiving
12 any of the four forms of assistance that confer eligibility for the special reduced rates approved
13 by the commission: *Provided*, That such rate reduction shall not exceed 20 percent of the rate
14 that would be otherwise applicable.

15 (c) Before any individual may qualify to receive the special reduced rates, the following
16 requirements must be met:

17 (1) The special reduced rates may apply only to current customers or to those persons
18 who subsequently become customers in their own right. If an SSI, TANF, TANF-UP or SNAP
19 recipient is living in a household that is served under the name of a person who is not an SSI,
20 TANF, TANF-UP or SNAP recipient, that service may not be changed or have been changed
21 subsequent to July 1 , 2011, to the name of the SSI, TANF, TANF-UP or SNAP recipient in order
22 to qualify for service under the special reduced rates.

23 (2) The burden of proving eligibility for the special reduced rates shall be on the customer
24 requesting such rates. The Department of Health and Human Resources shall establish by rules
25 and procedures:

26 (A) To inform persons receiving any of the four forms of assistance that confer eligibility
27 for the special reduced rates about the availability of the special reduced rates;

28 (B) To assist applicants for the special reduced rates in proving their eligibility therefor;
29 and

30 (C) To assist water, sewer, or combined water and sewer utilities offering the special
31 reduced rates in determining on a continuing basis the eligibility therefor of persons receiving or
32 applying for such rates.

33 The commission shall establish rules and procedures for the application for and provision
34 of service under the special reduced rates and for the determination and certification of revenue
35 deficiencies resulting from the special reduced rates.

36 (3) In order to provide each eligible residential utility customer the special reduced rates,
37 each utility providing the special reduced rates shall credit against amounts otherwise owed by
38 each customer an amount equal to the difference between the total amount that each customer
39 was actually billed during the previous month and the total amount that each customer would
40 have been entitled to be billed under the special reduced rates. Each credit shall be fully reflected
41 on the first bill issued to each customer after approval of each customer's application for the
42 special reduced rates, except in cases where the interval between the approval and the issuance
43 of the next bill is so short that it is administratively impracticable to do so, in which case, such
44 credits shall be fully reflected on the second bill issued to each customer after approval of that
45 customer's application. If the interval between the approval and the issuance of the next bill is 15
46 days or more, it may not be deemed administratively impracticable to reflect the credit on the
47 customer's first bill.

ARTICLE 3. DUTIES AND PRIVILEGES OF PUBLIC UTILITIES SUBJECT TO REGULATIONS OF COMMISSION.

§24-3-2. Discrimination prohibited.

1 No public utility subject to the provisions of this chapter shall, directly or indirectly, by any
2 special rate, rebate, drawback or other device or method, charge, demand, collect or receive from
3 any person, firm or corporation, a greater or less compensation, for any service rendered or to be
4 rendered, than it charges, demands, collects, or receives from any other person, firm or
5 corporation for doing a like and contemporaneous service under the same or substantially similar
6 circumstances and conditions.

7 It shall be unlawful for any public utility subject to the provisions of this chapter to make or

8 give any undue or unreasonable preference or advantage to any particular person, company, firm,
9 corporation or locality, or any particular character of traffic or service, in any respect whatsoever,
10 or to subject any particular person, firm, corporation, company or locality, or any particular
11 character of traffic or service, to any undue or unreasonable prejudice or disadvantage in any
12 respect whatsoever.

13 Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the commission from:

14 (a) Authorizing or requiring any rate design consistent with the purposes and policies set
15 forth in §24-2A-1 *et seq.* of this code; or

16 (b) Authorizing a private water, sewer, or combined water and sewer utility to voluntarily
17 implement a rate design featuring reduced rates and charges for service to qualifying low-income
18 residential customers.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to provide reduced rates for low-income residential customers of privately-owned water, sewer or combined water and sewer utilities.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.