

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2022 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 640

BY SENATOR NELSON

[Introduced February 15, 2022; referred
to the Committee on Government Organization]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §24-1-9 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
2 to the Public Service Commission; and eliminating the requirement of sending certain
3 recommended decisions by certified mail.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS.

§24-1-9. Recommended decision by hearing commissioner, hearing examiner, or panel.

1 (a) Any order recommended by a single hearing commissioner, a hearing examiner, or a
2 panel consisting of a hearing examiner and a single commissioner with respect to any matter
3 referred for hearing shall be in writing and shall set forth separately findings of fact and
4 conclusions of law, which findings of fact shall make specific reference to the evidence in the
5 record which supports such findings and shall be filed with the commission. A copy of ~~such~~ the
6 recommended order shall be served upon the parties who have appeared in the proceeding.

7 (b) Before any order is recommended, the parties shall be afforded an opportunity to
8 submit, within the time prescribed by the hearing commissioner, hearing examiner, or panel,
9 proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law and briefs.

10 (c) The commission shall serve a copy of the recommended order on the parties by one
11 of the following means:

12 (1) By ~~certified~~ U.S. mail; ~~return receipt requested~~ or

13 (2) By electronic transmission: *Provided*, That the party has the capability to receive the
14 electronic transmission, has furnished an electronic address, and has agreed in writing to accept
15 recommended orders electronically. Electronic transmissions shall contain a “return receipt” or
16 “read receipt” mechanism to assure that a recommended order was received by the party:

17 *Provided, however*, That if the commission does not receive a confirmatory electronic
18 transmission acknowledging the recommended order was received by the party, via return receipt,
19 read receipt, or electronic mail, within three business days of service, the commission shall serve
20 the recommended order by ~~certified~~ U.S. mail. ~~return receipt requested~~

21 (d) Service is complete when the recommended order is placed in the mail or transmitted
22 electronically to the party.

23 (e) Within the time prescribed, the parties shall be afforded an opportunity to file
24 exceptions to the recommended order and a brief in support, provided the time fixed is not less
25 than 15 days from the date of service of ~~such~~ the recommended order.

26 (f) In all proceedings in which exceptions have been filed to a recommended order, the
27 commission, before issuing its final order, may afford the parties an opportunity for oral argument.
28 When exceptions are filed, the commission shall consider the exceptions. If sufficient reason
29 appears for the exceptions, the commission may grant the review or make an order or hold or
30 authorize further hearings or proceedings. The commission, after review, upon the whole record,
31 or as supplemented by a further hearing, shall decide the matter in controversy and make
32 appropriate order thereon.

33 (g) When no exceptions are filed within the time specified, the recommended order shall
34 become the order of the commission five days following the expiration of the period for filing
35 exceptions unless the order is stayed or postponed by the commission: *Provided*, That the
36 commission may, on its own motion before the order becomes the order of the commission, review
37 any matter, and take action as if exceptions had been filed.

38 (h) The commission, a hearing commissioner, a hearing examiner, or panel to whom a
39 matter is referred may expedite the hearing and decision of any case, if the public interest
40 requires, by the use of pretrial conferences, stipulations and agreements, prepared testimony,
41 depositions, daily transcripts of evidence, trial briefs and oral argument in lieu of briefs.