

2026 SESSION

INTRODUCED

26104191D

1 **HOUSE BILL NO. 898**

2 Offered January 14, 2026

3 Prefiled January 13, 2026

4 *A BILL to amend and reenact §§ 56-245.1:3 and 56-245.1:4 of the Code of Virginia, relating to electric, gas,*
5 *water, and wastewater utilities; disconnections for nonpayment; certain fees prohibited.*

6 Patron—Herring

7 Committee Referral Pending

8 **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

9 **1. That §§ 56-245.1:3 and 56-245.1:4 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:**

10 **§ 56-245.1:3. Disconnection suspension for utilities.**

11 A. As used in this section, "utility" means an electric company, a natural gas supplier, or a water supplier
12 or wastewater service provider that is subject to the regulation of the Commission.

13 B. 1. No electric utility shall disconnect from service any residential customer for the nonpayment of bills
14 or fees (i) when the forecasted temperature low is at or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit within the 24 hours
15 following the scheduled disconnection or (ii) when the forecasted temperature is at or above 92 degrees
16 Fahrenheit within the 24 hours following the scheduled disconnection.

17 2. No gas utility shall disconnect from service any residential customer for nonpayment of bills or fees
18 when the forecasted temperature low is at or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit within the 24 hours following the
19 scheduled disconnection.

20 3. No water or wastewater utility shall disconnect from service any residential customer when the
21 forecasted temperature is at or above 92 degrees Fahrenheit within the 24 hours following the scheduled
22 disconnection.

23 4. To ascertain the projected temperature as provided in this subsection, each utility shall refer to the
24 forecasted local temperature provided by the National Weather Service where the customer to be
25 disconnected is located.

26 C. No ~~utilities~~ utility shall disconnect from service any residential customer for nonpayment of bills or
27 fees on Fridays, weekends, state holidays, or the day immediately preceding a state holiday.

28 D. Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit utilities from voluntarily suspending scheduled
29 disconnections during other extreme weather events, emergency conditions, or circumstances in which a
30 utility determines such suspension necessary to protect the health and safety of its customers and the
31 reliability of utility service in the Commonwealth. Further, nothing in this section shall be construed to
32 prohibit (i) a disconnection required by the conditions of subdivision A 8 of § 56-247.1, (ii) emergency
33 disconnections for health and safety purposes, or (iii) the occurrence of an automatic service suspension
34 associated with prepaid utility service. Any fees or expenses incurred by a utility in complying with the
35 requirements of this section shall be recovered by the utility *through its base rates for service*.

36 **§ 56-245.1:4. Notice procedures for nonpayment; disconnecting utility service; disconnection and
37 reconnection fees prohibited.**

38 A. Each utility subject to the provisions of § 56-245.1:3 shall provide to each of its residential customers a
39 copy of its disconnection for nonpayment policy (i) at any time a new residential account is established, (ii)
40 when any disconnection for nonpayment of bills or fees is scheduled by including a copy of the policy with
41 such notice, or (iii) by publishing the disconnection policy on the utility's website. Each such utility shall
42 provide all required notices in English and Spanish. Such required notices shall include information regarding
43 payment plans and state, federal, or utility energy assistance programs.

44 B. Each utility subject to the provisions of this section shall deliver notice of nonpayment of bills or fees
45 to its residential customers prior to disconnection by using at least two of the following methods: (i) mail, (ii)
46 email, (iii) text message, (iv) phone call, or (v) door hanger.

47 C. Utility disconnections due to the nonpayment of bills or fees are prohibited for residential customers
48 until the customer's account is 60 days in arrears. After each missed payment, the utility shall provide notice
49 pursuant to subsection B and make contact with the customer and offer bill payment assistance, arrange a
50 payment plan, or provide information to the customer for other bill payment assistance or energy savings
51 programs.

52 D. No electric or gas utility shall require a deposit of more than 25 percent of the arrearage amount for
53 service, exclusive of nonpayment fees, penalties, or interest, in order to restore service to any residential
54 customer where such utility received funding from the Department of Social Services for such customer
55 through the Home Energy Assistance Program pursuant to § 63.2-805 within the last 12 months. A customer
56 is eligible for this provision once every three years.

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59 *E. No utility shall charge a disconnection fee or reconnection fee to restore service to a residential*
60 *customer disconnected due to the nonpayment of bills or fees.*