

26104191D

HOUSE BILL NO. 898

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 13, 2026

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

Patron—Herring

Committee Referral Pending

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That §§ 56-245.1:3 and 56-245.1:4 of the Code of Virginia are amended and reenacted as follows:****§ 56-245.1:3. Disconnection suspension for utilities.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INTRODUCED

HB898

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.*