

STATE OF VERMONT
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

Case No. 20-0703-PET

Vermont Legal Aid request for a moratorium on utility and telecommunications shutoffs during State of Emergency	
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Order entered: 05/24/2021

ORDER EXTENDING DISCONNECTION MORATORIUM UNTIL JUNE 30, 2021

Today's Order concerns a petition by Vermont Legal Aid to the Vermont Public Utility Commission ("Commission") requesting the temporary halt of involuntary utility disconnections during the state of emergency in Vermont because of the COVID-19 pandemic (the "temporary moratorium"). In today's Order, the Commission extends the temporary moratorium on the disconnection of certain utility services until June 30, 2021.¹

On March 18, 2020, the Commission issued an Order granting a temporary moratorium on involuntary utility service disconnections in Vermont. Over the course of many months, and after significant input from concerned parties, the Commission issued additional Orders that extended and expanded the temporary moratorium and the protections in the March 18, 2020, Order. Except for a single span of time during which the temporary moratorium was lifted to encourage utility customers to make use of time-limited federal funds before those funds expired, the Commission has maintained the temporary moratorium. In our most recent Order of March 29, 2021, we extended the temporary moratorium until May 31, 2021.

The Commission now extends the temporary moratorium until June 30, 2021, for the same reasons explained in our March 29, 2021, Order. In particular, the Governor has now extended the State of Emergency through June 15, 2021. While we do not necessarily need to extend the temporary moratorium every time the Governor extends the State of Emergency, we conclude that at the moment it would be premature to end the temporary moratorium. As we noted in our earlier Order, "many Vermonters are still suffering from the public health and economic impacts of COVID-19, and now is not the time to eliminate disconnection protections

¹ The temporary moratorium applies to involuntary disconnections of natural gas, electric, and traditional landline telecommunications service to consumers of regulated utilities in Vermont, except for unoccupied properties.

that have proven so beneficial to so many Vermonters, particularly Vermonters who are still struggling to find work. Rather than prematurely lift the moratorium, we must keep it in place at this time.”² Further, as was the case when we issued our March 29, 2021, Order, we are still “waiting to see how federal financial assistance is allocated” and whether state financial assistance may also be available to utility customers who are at risk of losing service for falling behind in their bills.³

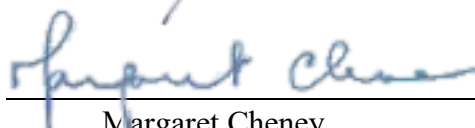
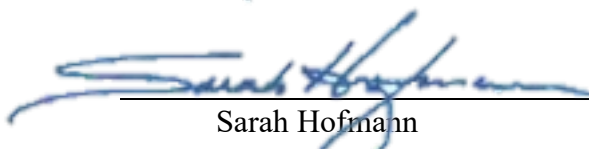
That said, we also note that Vermont is continuing to move towards reopening all sectors of the economy, and we may soon be at the point where there is no longer a need for a temporary moratorium. The Commission therefore directs the utilities in this proceeding to file with the Commission, **no later than June 15, 2021**, detailed descriptions of how they will engage with customers to resolve outstanding, past-due balances after the temporary moratorium ends and how they will address terminations of service for nonpayment going forward. The utilities and any other parties to this proceeding may file any other comments, recommendations, or objections regarding the next steps in this proceeding **no later than June 15, 2021**.

SO ORDERED.

² Order of March 29, 2021, at 6.

³ *Id.*

Dated at Montpelier, Vermont this 24th day of May, 2021.

 _____ Anthony Z. Roisman	)	PUBLIC UTILITY
	)	
 _____ Margaret Cheney	)	COMMISSION
	)	
 _____ Sarah Hofmann	)	OF VERMONT

OFFICE OF THE CLERK

Filed: May 24, 2021

Attest: 

Clerk of the Commission

Notice to Readers: This decision is subject to revision of technical errors. Readers are requested to notify the Clerk of the Commission (by e-mail, telephone, or in writing) of any apparent errors, in order that any necessary corrections may be made. (E-mail address: puc.clerk@vermont.gov).

Appeal of this decision to the Supreme Court of Vermont must be filed with the Clerk of the Commission within 30 days. Appeal will not stay the effect of this Order, absent further order by this Commission or appropriate action by the Supreme Court of Vermont. Motions for reconsideration or stay, if any, must be filed with the Clerk of the Commission within 28 days of the date of this decision and Order.

PUC Case No. 20-0703-PET - SERVICE LIST

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