

1-1 By: Whitmire S.B. No. 1976  
 1-2 (In the Senate - Filed March 10, 2017; March 27, 2017, read  
 1-3 first time and referred to Committee on Business & Commerce;  
 1-4 April 20, 2017, reported adversely, with favorable Committee  
 1-5 Substitute by the following vote: Yeas 8, Nays 0; April 20, 2017,  
 1-6 sent to printer.)

1-7 COMMITTEE VOTE

	Yea	Nay	Absent	PNV
1-8				
1-9	X			
1-10	X			
1-11	X			
1-12	X			
1-13	X			
1-14	X			
1-15	X			
1-16			X	
1-17	X			

1-18 COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE FOR S.B. No. 1976 By: Estes

1-19 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
 1-20 AN ACT

1-21 relating to benefit programs provided by retail electric providers  
 1-22 and certificated telecommunications utilities for low-income  
 1-23 customers.

1-24 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

1-25 SECTION 1. Section 17.007, Utilities Code, is amended to  
 1-26 read as follows:

1-27 Sec. 17.007. IDENTIFICATION [ELIGIBILITY] PROCESS FOR  
 1-28 CUSTOMER SERVICE BENEFITS [DISCOUNTS]. (a) The Health and Human  
 1-29 Services Commission, on request of the commission, shall assist in  
 1-30 developing an automatic process for identifying low-income  
 1-31 customers to retail electric providers and certificated  
 1-32 telecommunications utilities to enable those providers and  
 1-33 utilities to offer customer service, discounts, bill payment  
 1-34 assistance, or other methods of assistance [The commission by rule  
 1-35 shall provide for an integrated eligibility process for customer  
 1-36 service discounts, including discounts under Sections 39.903 and  
 1-37 55.015].

1-38 (b) The commission and the Health and Human Services  
 1-39 Commission shall continue the memorandum of understanding entered  
 1-40 into by those agencies in effect on January 1, 2017, that  
 1-41 establishes the respective duties of those agencies in relation to  
 1-42 the automatic process, and may amend the memorandum of  
 1-43 understanding as necessary to achieve the goals of this section.

1-44 (c) The commission may not require a retail electric  
 1-45 provider or a certificated telecommunications utility to offer  
 1-46 customer service, discounts, bill payment assistance, targeted  
 1-47 bill messaging, or other benefits for which the provider or utility  
 1-48 is not reimbursed.

1-49 (d) The commission may not submit a request to the Health  
 1-50 and Human Services Commission to provide for a process to identify  
 1-51 low-income electric customers for a fiscal year unless:

1-52 (1) the commission receives a request from one or more  
 1-53 retail electric providers not later than July 31 of the previous  
 1-54 fiscal year for a list of low-income electric customers to be  
 1-55 developed; and

1-56 (2) each retail electric provider that submits a  
 1-57 request to the commission under Subdivision (1) agrees to reimburse  
 1-58 the commission for the cost of development of the list on terms  
 1-59 agreed to by the commission and the provider.

1-60 SECTION 2. Section 55.015(b), Utilities Code, is amended to

2-1 read as follows:

2-2 (b) The commission shall adopt rules providing for  
2-3 automatic enrollment to receive lifeline service for eligible  
2-4 consumers. The Health and Human Services Commission [~~Texas~~  
2-5 ~~Department of Human Services~~], on request of the commission, shall  
2-6 assist in the adoption and implementation of those rules. The  
2-7 commission and the Health and Human Services Commission [~~Texas~~  
2-8 ~~Department of Human Services~~] shall enter into a memorandum of  
2-9 understanding establishing the respective duties of those agencies  
2-10 [~~the commission and department~~] in relation to the automatic  
2-11 enrollment.

2-12 SECTION 3. Section 56.021, Utilities Code, is amended to  
2-13 read as follows:

2-14 Sec. 56.021. UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND ESTABLISHED. The  
2-15 commission shall adopt and enforce rules requiring local exchange  
2-16 companies to establish a universal service fund to:

2-17 (1) assist telecommunications providers in providing  
2-18 basic local telecommunications service at reasonable rates in high  
2-19 cost rural areas under two plans:

2-20 (A) the Texas High Cost Universal Service Plan  
2-21 (16 T.A.C. Section 26.403); and

2-22 (B) the Small and Rural Incumbent Local Exchange  
2-23 Company Universal Service Plan (16 T.A.C. Section 26.404);

2-24 (2) reimburse the telecommunications carrier that  
2-25 provides the statewide telecommunications relay access service  
2-26 under Subchapter D;

2-27 (3) finance the specialized telecommunications  
2-28 assistance program established under Subchapter E;

2-29 (4) reimburse the department and the commission for  
2-30 costs incurred in implementing this chapter and Chapter 57;

2-31 (5) reimburse a telecommunications carrier providing  
2-32 lifeline service as provided by 47 C.F.R. Part 54, Subpart E, as  
2-33 amended;

2-34 (6) finance the implementation and administration of  
2-35 the identification process under [~~an integrated eligibility~~  
2-36 ~~process created under~~] Section 17.007 for [~~customer service~~  
2-37 ~~discounts relating to~~] telecommunications services[~~, including~~  
2-38 ~~outreach expenses the commission determines are reasonable and~~  
2-39 ~~necessary~~];

2-40 (7) reimburse a designated provider under Subchapter  
2-41 F;

2-42 (8) reimburse a successor utility under Subchapter G;  
2-43 and

2-44 (9) finance the program established under Subchapter  
2-45 H.

2-46 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2017.

2-47 \* \* \* \* \*