

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Office of Commissioner Brandon Presley MISSISSIPPI PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION NORTHERN DISTRICT

### **PSC Prohibition on Utility Shutoff Set to End May 26<sup>th</sup>, Customer Protections Put in Place**

Jackson, Mississippi (May 12, 2020) – Today, the Mississippi Public Service Commission announced the order suspending utility cutoffs has been extended to Tuesday, May 26, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. The order prohibiting disconnections will expire after May 26<sup>th</sup> and customers with past due bills will be subject to disconnection if payment plans have not been arranged. This order applies to all water, sewer, electricity and gas services. In order to help customers who may still be economically struggling to meet their obligations, the PSC extended the order an additional 14 days to allow customers time to make payments or make payment arrangements. The PSC order also makes the following provisions to assist customers:

- All utilities shall be encouraged to immediately begin offering payment plan arrangements with any customer who has a past due amount and will be subject to disconnection after May 26<sup>th</sup>. If a customer cannot reach a payment arrangement with utility the customer may contact the Commission for assistance in that effort.
- If both the utility and customer agree, any cash deposit held by the public utility from the individual customer may be used to pay down a past-due balance.
- If a customer had an outstanding balance prior or during the COVID-19 pandemic, they are encouraged to reach out to their utility to create a payment plan as soon as possible.
- The Commission will continue to enforce the Ratepayer Bill of Rights, specifically that during life-threatening situations where a medical doctor in the State of Mississippi or an adjoining state certifies that such services are needed for medical reasons related to the customer's health. Public utilities



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shall make a form available to customers to be used in these instances and shall provide receipt of the same.

- Any utility that receives notice that a customer has been approved for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for the delinquent amount owed shall not disconnect service for 30 days.
- The Commission will continue to prohibit electric shutoffs in the event that any excessive heat warning has been issued by the National Weather Service.
- The Commission has established a portal on the Commission's website containing links to qualify for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and other economic assistance programs for the benefit of utility customers.

During the state of emergency, the Commission reserves the right to issue subsequent orders as needed to protect public health and welfare.

If you have questions regarding this order or your utility service call Commissioner Presley's office at 1-800-637-7722 or visit [www.psc.ms.gov](http://www.psc.ms.gov).



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