

Public Utility Commission of Texas Reminds Public of Consumer Protection Rules

Electric Bill Assistance Available Amid Summer Heat

(Austin, Texas) – The Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) is reminding Texans of electric industry rules that protect consumers from disconnection due to financial difficulties or during extreme heat and require providers to offer bill payment assistance.

“As Texans along the Gulf Coast continue to recover from Hurricane Beryl and summer temperatures hold across the state, it’s important for all consumers to be aware of the rules and financial resources in place to protect them and their electricity service,” PUCT Executive Director Connie Corona said. “Ensuring the power stays on for all Texans, regardless of their financial situation, is a top priority for all of us at the PUCT.”

Several utilities impacted by Hurricane Beryl have suspended disconnections to allow consumers more time to recover from the storm. More details on these suspensions are available in this memo.

PUCT customer protection rules require retail electric providers (REPs) to offer bill payment assistance programs and to explain the eligibility requirements. Electric cooperatives and municipally owned utilities in Texas are not subject to this rule; however, most offer some form of bill assistance.

A customer who cannot pay a bill in full should contact their REP. If a customer indicates an inability to pay, the REP must inform the customer of all applicable payment options and assistance. Depending on the customer’s payment history, one of the following options may be available:

- A payment arrangement is an agreement between the REP and a customer to pay a bill after its due date, but before the next bill. This is sometimes called “an extension.”
- A deferred payment plan allows a customer to pay an outstanding balance in



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installments. The initial payment required cannot be more than half the amount due. The REP must allow the customer at least five bills to pay the remainder. The REP may apply a switchhold to the customer’s account that will prevent the customer from switching to another REP until the plan is paid in full. A deferred payment plan must be made available for a bill that becomes due in July, August, or September.

Investor-owned utilities are required to offer similar payment assistance options to their customers. More information on the requirements for investor-owned utilities is available in Section 25.28(i) of the PUCT’s rules.

PUCT customer protection rules also prohibit the disconnection of a customer’s electricity service for non-payment during extreme weather emergencies, including during extreme heat. The PUCT’s definition of an extreme weather emergency follows National Weather Service advisory criteria and is outlined in the rule (Chapter 25, Section 25.483 and 25.29j). Additionally, REPs are required to offer deferred payment plans for bills that become due during extreme weather.

The PUCT encourages all consumers who may

be experiencing financial challenges related to their energy bill to contact their provider to see what assistance is available or call 211 for information on other programs in their area. Additionally, the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs offers an online tool for consumers to search for utility bill assistance in their area.

The PUCT has additional protections for consumers who are ill or disabled and have established that any disconnection in service would cause illness or the worsening of an existing illness. For more information on these protections, visit the PUCT’s Know Your Rights webpage.

In addition to these rules and resources, the PUCT’s Consumer Protection Division is always available to work with Texans to reconcile issues related to their utility service. Consumers are encouraged to first contact their electric provider to resolve their issue, and if they are unable to reach a resolution, they can contact CPD by emailing consumer@puc.texas.gov or calling 1-888-782-8477.

The PUCT’s Power to Save website provides energy saving tips and other helpful consumer resources.

Clip resurfaces of Vance criticizing Harris for being ‘childless,’ testing Trump’s new running mate

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON | ASSOCIATED PRESS

(AP NEWS) - Comments JD Vance made in 2021 questioning Vice President Kamala Harris’ leadership because she did not have biological children have resurfaced, testing the young conservative senator in his early days campaigning as part of the Republicans’ presidential ticket.

During Vance’s bid for the Senate in Ohio, he said in a Fox News interview that “we are effectively run in this country via the Democrats,” and referred to them as “a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives and the choices that they’ve made and so they want to make the rest of the country miserable, too.” He said that included Harris, U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a New York Democrat.

“How does it make any sense that we’ve turned our country over to people who don’t really have a direct stake in it?” asked Vance, who is now Donald Trump’s running mate. Harris became stepmother to two teenagers when she married entertainment lawyer Douglas Emhoff in 2014. And Buttigieg announced he and his husband adopted infant twins in September 2021, more than a month before Vance made those comments.

The clip has started to spread online, with Hillary Clinton sharing it in a Tuesday post on X and adding sarcastically “what a normal, relatable guy who certainly doesn’t hate women having freedoms.”

The recirculated comment may be a sign of the GOP ticket’s troubles appealing to women voters, and on the issue of reproductive rights. It follows the explosive entrance in the race of Harris, who secured the support of enough delegates to become the official nominee in less than 32 hours after President Joe Biden ended his reelection bid.



JD Vance



Vice President Kamala Harris

“we are effectively run in this country via the Democrats...a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives and the choices that they’ve made...” - JD Vance

It also lays out some of the fears expressed by strategists that Trump took a political risk in picking a running mate who has been in Congress less than two years and is largely untested on a bigger stage. Trump liked Vance’s telegenic qualities and said he reminded him of “a young Abraham Lincoln.”

The Harris campaign contested Vance’s stance, saying “every single American has a stake in this country’s future.”

“Ugly, personal attacks from JD Vance and Donald Trump are in line with their dangerous Project 2025 agenda to ban abortion, decimate our democracy, and gut Social Security,” said James Singer, a Harris campaign spokesman, referring to a policy and personnel plan for a second Trump term that was crafted by a host of former administration officials. Trump has been trying to distance himself from it. Project 2025 says the Department of Health and Human Services should “pursue a robust agenda” to protect “the fundamental right to life.” However, the document contains no proposals to cut Social Security, though the Heritage Foundation that oversaw it has long pushed for changes to the entitlement. The plan outlines a dramatic expansion of presidential power and a plan to fire as many as 50,000 government workers.

Vance’s spokesperson said the Harris campaign is lying about Vance’s views, noting her record is “littered with countless failures and disasters.”

“It’s well known that Senator Vance found success in life due in large part to the influence of strong

female role models like his grandmother,” spokesperson Taylor Van Kirk said.

Vance, 39, is a former Marine and businessman who was first elected to public office in 2022. He wrote the 2016 bestseller “Hillbilly Elegy,” and developed a strong rapport with Trump, his son Donald Trump Jr. and leading MAGA figures with his personal story of growing up in Appalachia in poverty with a mother battling drug addiction could resonate with voters.

One of the major questions Vance is facing is on his abortion stance. Vance previously said he would support a federal bill to prohibit abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy, but believes in certain exceptions.

In 2021, Vance floated an idea to allow parents to cast ballots on behalf of their children, saying during a speech at the conservative nonprofit Intercollegiate Studies Institute in Virginia that people who don’t have children “don’t have as much of an investment in the future of the country.”

“When you go to the polls in this country as a parent, you should have more power, you should have more of an availability to speak your voice in our democratic republic than people who don’t have kids,” he said.

“Doesn’t this mean that non parents don’t have as much of a voice as parents?” he said critics would then ask. “Doesn’t this mean that parents get a bigger say in how a democracy functions? Yes, absolutely.”