

Resolution Supporting the Gathering of Data for Electric and Natural Gas Distribution Companies by Individual State Utility Commissions or Energy Offices

WHEREAS, The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) recognizes the importance of gathering comparable aggregate residential billing and arrearage data to quantify the extent of customer indebtedness to utilities and the financial impact of customer indebtedness on utilities; to evaluate the impact on customer affordability of essential electric and natural gas service; and, to support the funding of State and federal low-income assistance programs, such as Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); *and*

WHEREAS, The lack of nationwide billing and arrearage data has made it more difficult for many consumer groups, legislative offices, and commissions to quantify the magnitude of the problem of non-payment for consumers; *and*

WHEREAS, The nationwide data compiled would be of great assistance to formulate State and national policies to assure affordable electric and natural gas service for residential customers, and to support programs which are necessary to the health, safety and welfare of American households; *and*

WHEREAS, The data compiled would provide State and federal policymakers with the tools needed to evaluate and ensure that federal energy assistance funds, such as LIHEAP, are adequate to meet utility-related emergencies due to increases in energy prices and/or weather-related emergencies; *and*

WHEREAS, The compilation of comparable, periodic billing and arrearage data for residential customers over time would be very beneficial to State and federal policymakers to evaluate the impact of market conditions, higher energy prices, and weather conditions; evaluate the need for additional targeted financial assistance and energy management programs, as well as the need for review of State commission policies and practices to protect seniors and low-income customers; *and*

WHEREAS, In recognition of the above, and in acknowledgment of the NARUC Staff Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs and National Regulatory Research Institute's (NRRRI) experience in collecting and reporting data from many States in 2002 and 2004, it is necessary to increase participation by States in order to have more comparable and inclusive data for the entire nation; *and*

WHEREAS, NARUC passed a resolution at its 2006 Winter Meetings directing that a survey be conducted and a collaborative workgroup of interested stakeholders be established, including the American Gas Association (AGA), the Edison Electric Institute (EEI), the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC), the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA), and the National Low Income Energy Consortium (NLIEC), to design a survey template, create a dictionary of terms, and review the final report publications; *and*

WHEREAS, NARUC recognizes that NASUCA, the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA), NCLC, NLIEC, and AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) support this resolution; *now, therefore, be it*

RESOLVED, That the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, convened in its November 2007 Annual Convention, urges each individual State to gather relevant utility billing and arrearage data from all electric and gas utilities within its State commission jurisdiction and encourages other providers of electric and gas services to work cooperatively with their State commission to provide necessary aggregate data; *and be it further*

RESOLVED, That NARUC directs the Staff Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs to continue its collaboration with all interested stakeholders in the same manner as 2006 and conduct a survey annually, beginning in 2008, to collect comparable billing and arrearage data; *and be it further*

RESOLVED, That NARUC urges each State commission or energy office to generate a list of commission or energy office contacts for this project; *and be it further*

RESOLVED, That NARUC urges each State commission or energy office to direct utility companies to forward all questions about the project to its commission contact, who, in turn, will then forward the questions to the Staff Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs or its designee in order to ensure the consistency of data collection; *and be it further*

RESOLVED, That NARUC urges each State commission or energy office to aggregate the company level data into appropriate industry summary level data and submit it to the Staff Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs or its designee for analysis; and urges each State commission or energy office contact to document all variations and exceptions in the data and submit it for analysis; *and be it further*

RESOLVED, That affected stakeholders be allowed an opportunity to review the data analysis and derived conclusions prior to publication in order to provide clarification and ensure consistency; *and be it further*

RESOLVED, That the Staff Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs and interested stakeholders develop a strategy for how to use the data effectively to support State and federal low-income energy assistance programs and document the impact affordability of essential natural gas and electric service has on customers; *and be it further*

RESOLVED, That the Staff Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs and interested stakeholders evaluate the survey instrument on how to improve data collection.

Sponsored by the Consumer Affairs Committee

Recommended by the NARUC Board of Directors, November 13, 2007

Adopted by the Committee of the Whole, November 14, 2007