

HF 2381 and SSB 3125 – Utility Anti-Consumer Protection Bill

- This bill removes consumer protections for customers of municipal utilities.
 - The bill removes requirements that municipal utilities provide a 30 day notice of any rate increase.
 - It removes access to the simple and low-barrier complaint process at the Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) for muni customers. Instead, a customer with a complaint that is not resolved with the utility would need to take the issue to district court, an incredibly high hurdle and a major rollback of customer protections.

- Some provisions would also reduce customer service for REC members. Especially concerning are rollbacks in protection from disconnection – a serious health and safety concern for customers. Both muni and REC customers would lose:
 - Uniform disconnection notice requirements. This bill would allow munis and RECs to adopt different and lesser requirements for notices of disconnection. This gives customers less time to determine whether they are able to avoid disconnection through a payment plan or other means.
 - The ability to take a complaint about a disconnection notice to the IUB before the disconnection happens. If a threat of disconnection is not appropriate, a customer will have no means to remedy the situation or challenge the accuracy of the bill.
 - The legislature previously recognized that all customers deserve equal protection around disconnections and required the rules be the same for all utility customers. There is no reason customers of munis and RECs should have less protection.

- Section 2 of the proposed bill would remove current requirements in section 476.1B(1)(f) regarding the encouragement of alternate energy production facilities. This statute as it is reflects the reality that renewable energy sources are less expensive, reduce environmental cost risk, and promote economic development. Munis and RECs should not be exempted from this requirement.

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