

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 16, 2021

Contacts:
Tammy Fiebelkorn, SWEEP
505-410-3884
Ona Porter, Prosperity Works
505-228-7506

New Mexico Families Starting to Receive Utility Disconnection Notices

HB206 Desperately Needed to Protect Vulnerable Customers

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Albuquerque, NM – Some of New Mexico’s poorest families have reported receiving disconnection notices from their electricity service providers, in spite of a recent New Mexico Public Regulation Commission order and efforts by legislators to prevent disconnections for low-income families. Customers receiving these notices notified customers that they will be disconnected if they did not pay utility bills in full by Tuesday, March 16. (See sample notice attached to news release.)

Due to the many economic challenges resulting from the pandemic, the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission instituted a moratorium that disallows cutoffs. That moratorium is ending soon, but no disconnections are allowed prior to May 4th, 2021. That prohibition isn’t stopping utilities from sending threatening collection notices (in English only) to low-income families throughout the state. Because that May 4th date was not provided in the notices, people reportedly took out payday loans or used money set aside for food or other necessities to pay these bills.

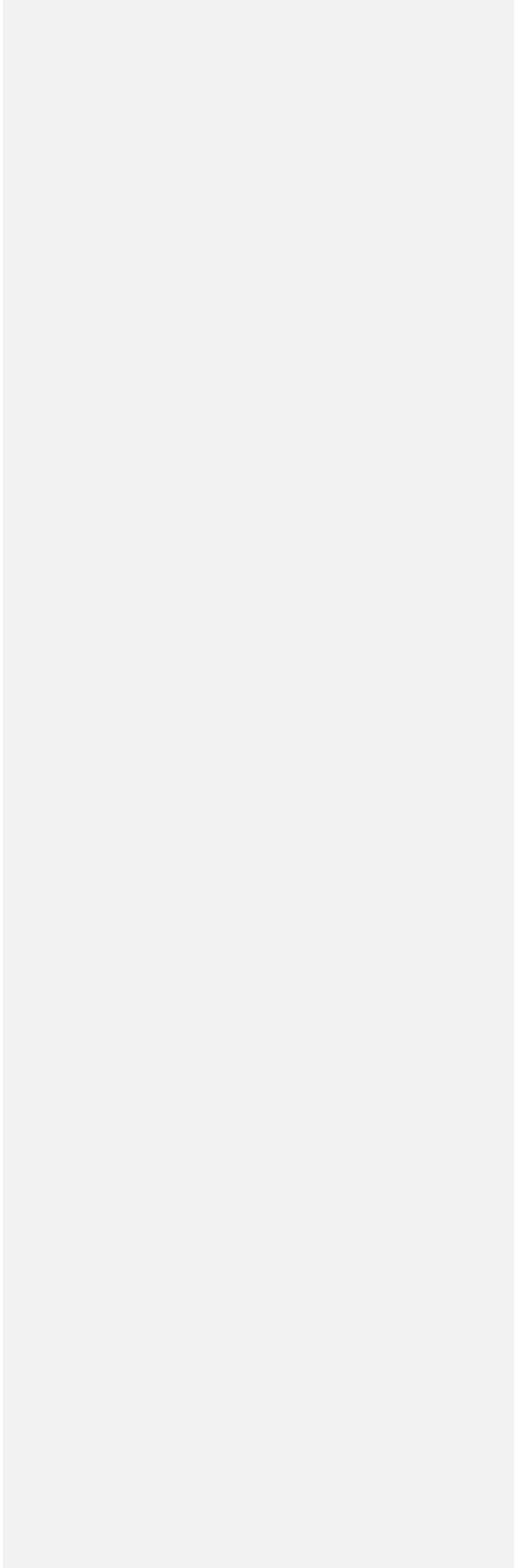
Representatives Kristina Ortez (D-42), Joanne Ferrary (D-37), Angelica Rubio (D-35), Andrea Romero (D-46) and Melanie Stansbury (D-28) introduced legislation this session aimed at helping thousands of New Mexico families who have fallen behind on paying their utility bills during the COVID–19 pandemic. Early numbers have indicated that more than 57,000 families face disconnection from electricity and more than 27,000 families face natural gas service disconnection.

House Bill 206 gives low-income New Mexicans a way out of the utility debt brought on by COVID by providing payment plans, partial arrears forgiveness and long-term solutions such as increased access to energy efficiency to reduce their bills in the future. The bill has passed committees in the House and the House floor and will now be heard by the Senate Finance Committee.

“The events in Texas several weeks ago just reaffirmed that access to utilities is essential to public health. Our state is facing a similar public health crisis created not by weather but by the economic challenges of an ongoing pandemic,” said Ona Porter, with Prosperity Works.

“Utilities in the state have continued to oppose the bill, stating that it is creating a “solution

without a problem.” We now are seeing in real time that this is a significant problem that needs to be addressed for the neediest in our state.”



WARNING NOTICE

DATE 3/11/21

MEMBERSEP# [REDACTED]
NAME [REDACTED]
SERV LOC [REDACTED]
METER NO. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] SEQ# [REDACTED]
CYCRT [REDACTED]
CURRENT CHARGES [REDACTED]
PAST DUE AMOUNT [REDACTED]
TOTAL DUE [REDACTED]
METER LOC [REDACTED]
NOTES [REDACTED]

THIS IS TO NOTIFY YOU THAT YOUR SERVICE WILL BE DISCONNECTED IF PAYMENT OF THE TOTAL DUE AMOUNT IS NOT RECEIVED IN OUR OFFICE BY 10:00 AM ON THIS DATE 3/16/21

PLEASE CALL OUR BUSINESS OFFICE CONCERNING THIS NOTICE.

ASK FOR THE COLLECTIONS CLERK
TELEPHONE: [REDACTED]
OR
[REDACTED]

IF YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY PAYING THIS BILL, CONTACT OUR OFFICE, OR CALL [REDACTED] YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR ASSISTANCE IN PAYING YOUR UTILITY BILL. INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON THE LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

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Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEEP) is a non-profit committed to saving money and protecting the environment by advancing energy efficiency in Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

Prosperity Works is a non-profit in Albuquerque that equips limited-income (LI) New Mexico households with social and financial assets to catalyze sustainable, equitable solutions for building strong, thriving communities.