SENATE BILL No. 73

Introduced by Senator Alpert

May 17, 2001

An act to amend Section 330 of, and to add Sections 743.10 and 743.11 to, the Public Utilities Code, relating to public utilities.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

SB 73, as introduced, Alpert. Electrical restructuring: interruptible service.

(1) Existing law sets forth certain findings and declarations relating to electrical restructuring.

This bill would find and declare that where cost-effective electric supply cannot be secured by the Independent System Operator or the state, any system outages should be managed so as to minimize disruption to the customers.

(2) Existing law permits the Public Utilities Commission to approve contracts between an electrical corporation and its heavy industrial customers for interruptible electrical service contracts. Existing law permits the commission to amend these contracts.

This bill would require the Governor, if cost-effective electric supply cannot be secured by the Independent System Operator or the state, in collaboration with certain entities, to establish certain purchasing guidelines and to create a system of managing any interruptions in a manner so as to minimize disruption to the customers.

This bill would also require the commission to create interruptibility programs in which larger customers or communities desiring higher levels of reliability may secure that reliability in exchange for fees established by the commission. The bill would require the programs to require public utility electrical corporations to configure their distribution so that selective and identifiable blocks of customers can be provided differing levels of reliability, and to alert customers of potential outages.

Because, under existing law, a violation of the above would be a crime, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program by creating a new crime.

(3) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes. State-mandated local program: yes.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 330 of the Public Utilities Code is amended to read:

330. In order to provide guidance in carrying out this chapter, the Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) It is the intent of the Legislature that a cumulative rate reduction of at least 20 percent be achieved not later than April 1, 2002, for residential and small commercial customers, from the rates in effect on June 10, 1996. In determining that the April 1, 2002, rate reduction has been met, the commission shall exclude the costs of the competitively procured electricity and the costs associated with the rate reduction bonds, as defined in Section 840.

(b) The people, businesses, and institutions of California spend nearly twenty-three billion dollars ($23,000,000,000) annually on electricity, so that reductions in the price of electricity would significantly benefit the economy of the state and its residents.

(c) The Public Utilities Commission has opened rulemaking and investigation proceedings with regard to restructuring California's electric power industry and reforming utility regulation.

(d) The commission has found, after an extensive public review process, that the interests of ratepayers and the state as a whole will be best served by moving from the regulatory framework existing on January 1, 1997, in which retail electricity service is provided principally by electrical corporations subject to an obligation to provide ultimate consumers in exclusive service territories with reliable electric service at regulated rates, to a framework under which competition would be allowed in the supply of electric power and customers would be allowed to have the right to choose their supplier of electric power.

(e) Competition in the electric generation market will encourage innovation, efficiency, and better service from all market participants, and will permit the reduction of costly regulatory oversight.

(f) The delivery of electricity over transmission and distribution systems is currently regulated, and will continue to be regulated to ensure system safety, reliability, environmental protection, and fair access for all market participants.

(g) Reliable *and cost-effective* electric service is of utmost importance to the safety, health, and welfare of the state's citizenry and economy. It is the intent of the Legislature that electric industry restructuring should enhance the reliability of the interconnected regional transmission systems, and provide strong coordination and enforceable protocols for all users of the power grid.

(h) It is important that sufficient supplies of electric generation will be available to maintain the reliable service to the citizens and businesses of the state.

(i) Reliable electric service depends on conscientious inspection and maintenance of transmission and distribution systems. To continue and enhance the reliability of the delivery of electricity, the Independent System Operator and the commission, respectively, should set inspection, maintenance, repair, and replacement standards.

(j) It is the intent of the Legislature that California enter into a compact with western region states. That compact should require the publicly and investor-owned utilities located in those states, that sell energy to California retail customers, to adhere to enforceable standards and protocols to protect the reliability of the interconnected regional transmission and distribution systems.

(k) In order to achieve meaningful wholesale and retail competition in the electric generation market, it is essential to do all of the following:

(1) Separate monopoly utility transmission functions from competitive generation functions, through development of independent, third-party control of transmission access and pricing.

(2) Permit all customers to choose from among competing suppliers of electric power.

(3) Provide customers and suppliers with open, nondiscriminatory, and comparable access to transmission and distribution services.

(*l*) The commission has properly concluded that:

(1) This competition will best be introduced by the creation of an Independent System Operator and an independent Power Exchange.

(2) Generation of electricity should be open to competition.

(3) There is a need to ensure that no participant in these new market institutions has the ability to exercise significant market power so that operation of the new market institutions would be distorted.

(4) These new market institutions should commence simultaneously with the phase in of customer choice, and the public will be best served if these institutions and the nonbypassable transition cost recovery mechanism referred to in subdivisions (s) to (w), inclusive, are in place simultaneously and no later than January 1, 1998.

(m) It is the ~~intention~~ *intent* of the Legislature that California's publicly owned electric utilities and investor-owned electric utilities should commit control of their transmission facilities to the Independent System Operator. These utilities should jointly advocate to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission a pricing methodology for the Independent System Operator that results in an equitable return on capital investment in transmission facilities for all Independent System Operator participants.

(n) Opportunities to acquire electric power in the competitive market must be available to California consumers as soon as practicable, but no later than January 1, 1998, so that all customers can share in the benefits of competition.

(o) Under the existing regulatory framework, California's electrical corporations were granted franchise rights to provide electricity to consumers in their service territories.

(p) Consistent with federal and state policies, California electrical corporations invested in power plants and entered into contractual obligations in order to provide reliable electrical service on a nondiscriminatory basis to all consumers within their service territories who requested service.

(q) The cost of these investments and contractual obligations are currently being recovered in electricity rates charged by electrical corporations to their consumers.

(r) Transmission and distribution of electric power remain essential services imbued with the public interest that are provided over facilities owned and maintained by the state's electrical corporations.

(s) It is proper to allow electrical corporations an opportunity to continue to recover, over a reasonable transition period, those costs and categories of costs for generation-related assets and obligations, including costs associated with any subsequent renegotiation or buyout of existing generation-related contracts, that the commission, prior to December 20, 1995, had authorized for collection in rates and that may not be recoverable in market prices in a competitive generation market, and appropriate additions incurred after December 20, 1995, for capital additions to generating facilities existing as of December 20, 1995, that the commission determines are reasonable and should be recovered, provided that the costs are necessary to maintain those facilities through December 31, 2001. In determining the costs to be recovered, it is appropriate to net the negative value of above market assets against the positive value of below market assets.

(t) The transition to a competitive generation market should be orderly, protect electric system reliability, provide the investors in these electrical corporations with a fair opportunity to fully recover the costs associated with commission approved generation-related assets and obligations, and be completed as expeditiously as possible.

(u) The transition to expanded customer choice, competitive markets, and performance based ratemaking as described in Decision 95-12-063, as modified by Decision 96-01-009, of the Public Utilities Commission, can produce hardships for employees who have dedicated their working lives to utility employment. It is preferable that any necessary reductions in the utility workforce directly caused by electrical restructuring, be accomplished through offers of voluntary severance, retraining, early retirement, outplacement, and related benefits. Whether workforce reductions are voluntary or involuntary, reasonable costs associated with these sorts of benefits should be included in the competition transition charge.

(v) Charges associated with the transition should be collected over a specific period of time on a nonbypassable basis and in a manner that does not result in an increase in rates to customers of electrical corporations. In order to insulate the policy of nonbypassability against incursions, if exemptions from the competition transition charge are granted, a firewall shall be created that segregates recovery of the cost of exemptions as follows:

(1) The cost of the competition transition charge exemptions granted to members of the combined class of residential and small commercial customers shall be recovered only from those customers.

(2) The cost of the competition transition charge exemptions granted to members of the combined class of customers other than residential and small commercial customers shall be recovered only from those customers. The commission shall retain existing cost allocation authority provided that the firewall and rate freeze principles are not violated.

(w) It is the intent of the Legislature to require and enable electrical corporations to monetize a portion of the competition transition charge for residential and small commercial consumers so that these customers will receive rate reductions of no less than 10 percent for 1998 continuing through 2002. Electrical corporations shall, by June 1, 1997, or earlier, secure the means to finance the competition transition charge by applying concurrently for financing orders from the Public Utilities Commission and for rate reduction bonds from the California Infrastructure and Economic Development Bank.

(x) California's public utility electrical corporations provide substantial benefits to all Californians, including employment and support of the state's economy. Restructuring the electric services industry pursuant to the act that added this chapter will continue these benefits, and will also offer meaningful and immediate rate reductions for residential and small commercial customers, and facilitate competition in the supply of electric power.

(y) Where cost-effective electric supply cannot be secured by the Independent System Operator or the state, any system outages should be managed so as to minimize disruption to the customers.

SEC. 2. Section 743.10 is added to the Public Utilities Code, to read:

743.10. If cost-effective electric supply cannot be secured by the Independent System Operator or the state, the Governor, in collaboration with the Independent System Operator, the commission, and public utility electrical corporations, shall do both of the following:

(a) Establish purchasing guidelines that allow the state and the Independent System Operator to define cost-effectiveness of short-term or ‘‘real-time’’ power.

(b) Create a system of managing any interruptions in a manner so as to minimize disruption to end-use customers.

SEC. 3. Section 743.11 is added to the Public Utilities Code, to read:

743.11. The commission, in consultation with the Independent System Operator, shall create interruptibility programs in which all of the following apply:

(a) Large customers or communities that desire higher levels of reliability may secure that higher reliability in exchange for fees established by the commission, to be applied by the commission to offset costs to those customers who are subject to service interruptions.

(b) Public utility electrical corporations shall give notice of any outages pursuant to these shall configure their distribution systems so that selective and identifiable blocks of customers can be provided differing levels of reliability.

(c) Public utility electrical corporations shall give notice of any outages pursuant to these interruptibility programs sufficient to alert all customers, in advance, to the potential outages.

SEC. 4. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

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