

Legislative UPDATE

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT relating to the confidentiality of certain government operated utility customer information.BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS: SECTION 1. Subchapter C, Chapter 552, Government Code is amended by adding new Section 552.161 to read as follows: Sec. 552.161. EXCEPTION: CONFIDENTIALITY OF CERTAIN GOVERNMENT OPERATED UTILITY CUSTOMER INFORMATION. (a) In this section: (1) "Advanced metering system" means any metering system that collects periodic data at regular intervals through the use of an automated wireless or radio network. (2) "Government-operated utility" has the meaning assigned by Section 182.051(3), Utilities Code. (b) Information is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021, Government Code, if it is information maintained by a government-operated utility that: (1) discloses whether services have been discontinued or are eligible for disconnection by the government-operated utility; or (2) is collected as part of an advanced metering system for usage, services, and billing, including, amounts billed or collected for utility usage, except that all such information is to be made available to that customer or their designated representative. (c) The exception to public disclosure created by this section is in addition to any exception created by Section 552.101, Government Code, including information made confidential by law pursuant to Section 182.052, Utilities Code. Public access to customer billing information covered by 552.101, Government Code, is denied to the extent provided by that section. SECTION 2. Section 182.052(a), (b), (c), and (d), Utilities Code, is amended to read as follows:(a) Except as provided by Section 182.054, a government-operated utility may not disclose personal information in a customer's account record, or any information relating to the volume or units of utility usage or the amounts billed to or collected from the individual for utility usage, unless the customer requests that the government-operated utility disclose such information. However, a government-operated utility may disclose information related to the customer's volume or units of utility usage per billing cycle if the primary source of water for such utility was a sole-source designated aquifer. (b) A customer may request disclosure of the information under Subsection (a) by delivering to the government-operated utility an appropriately marked form provided under Subsection (c)(3) or any other written request for disclosure (c) A government-operated utility shall include with a bill sent to each customer or on its website: (1) a notice of the customer's right to request disclosure under this subchapter; and (2) a form by which the customer may request disclosure by marking an appropriate box on the form and returning it to the government-operated utility by mail or electronically. (d) A customer may rescind a request for disclosure by providing the government-operated utility written request to treat such personal information as confidential from and after the date the government-operated utility receives such written request. SECTION 3. Section 182.053, Utilities Code, is repealed. SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1,2021.