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State of Vermont
Public Utility Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION REINSTATES MORATORIUM ON DISCONNECTION OF UTILITY SERVICE DURING THE COVID STATE OF EMERGENCY

Montpelier, VT, December 22, 2020 – Today the Vermont Public Utility Commission ("Commission") again directed the state's regulated utilities to stop any disconnection of utility service due to nonpayment of electricity, natural gas, and landline phone bills. This moratorium on involuntary utility disconnections will last through March 31, 2021.

The Commission first prohibited the disconnection of utility service due to nonpayment of bills on March 18, 2020. However, the Commission lifted that moratorium on October 15 for several reasons, including the desire to encourage utility customers to apply for funds available through the Vermont COVID-19 Arrearage Assistance Program ("VCAAP"), a time-limited program that provided financial assistance to utility customers facing the threat of disconnection due to an inability to pay bills during the pandemic. Utilities had reported that without the possibility of disconnection, few customers were applying for VCAAP assistance or engaging with their utilities to discuss payment plans. In fact, since the moratorium was lifted on October 15, utilities were able to work with their customers to secure the full $8 million available through VCAAP to relieve at least some of the financial pressure on utilities and their customers.

Now that the VCAAP has ended as of December 15, the Commission has decided to reinstate the moratorium to prevent the disconnection of utility service in the face of a worsening pandemic and winter conditions. Commission chair Anthony Z. Roisman stated, "Vermonters need to be able to keep the lights on, their homes warm, and their phone lines open as they survive the winter months of the pandemic."

In renewing the moratorium, the Commission stressed to utility customers the importance of continuing to work with their utilities to make reasonable payment plans that will help them avoid building up unmanageable balances or being disconnected when the moratorium ends.

For more information, please contact John Cotter, Deputy General Counsel, at john.cotter@vermont.gov. Today's Order can be found by searching for Case No. 20- 0703-PET in ePUC, the PUC's online document-management system (https://epuc.vermont.gov/).