

Texas Senate Passes Landmark Energy Efficiency Bill

18-13 bipartisan vote increases energy savings goals for utilities for first time since 2011, addresses rising utility bills of Texas families

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Austin, TX -- Today, a bipartisan group of Texas State Senators passed Senate Bill 258, which would increase the energy efficiency goals for the state of Texas for the first time since 2011, on a vote of 18 ayes and 13 nays.

The bill, authored by Sen. Sarah Eckhardt (D-Austin), would require Texas transmission and distribution utilities (aka, the poles and wires utilities that run energy efficiency programs in the deregulated utility areas in Texas) to achieve energy efficiency savings equal to 1% of the annual electric use of their customers. Currently, utilities are required to meet a goal of 0.40% (or four-tenths of one percent) of peak demand, a goal that most utilities already meet easily. If enacted, SB 258 would change the savings goal to a percentage of energy use rather than peak demand. Utilities are meeting the equivalent of one-fourth of one percent of energy savings. **SB 258 would quadruple investments in energy efficiency by 2030.**

A broad and growing coalition of stakeholders, including environment, labor, low-income advocates, consumer groups, and more, have worked steadfastly since Winter Storm Uri to bring attention to the need for agency and legislative action to reduce the rising costs of electric bills, to ease stress on the grid by reducing demand and avoiding the need for costly new power plants, and to boost local economic development. SB 258 would meet all of these goals because it would strengthen successful energy efficiency programs that weatherize homes and businesses run through utilities.

The bill now goes to the Texas House, where it is expected to be referred to the House Committee on State Affairs.

In response, Sierra Club Conservation Director Cyrus Reed, released the following statement:

“We are very thankful for the tireless efforts of Senator Eckhardt, her co-authors and thousands of Texans that fought to bring attention to the cheapest, quickest, and cleanest way to make our grid more reliable: increasing energy efficiency programs at private utilities. These programs will help consumers save money and lower stress on our electric grid. We also appreciate the leadership of

Chair Dr. Charles Schwertner in moving the bill out of committee. We call on Speaker Dade Phelan to prioritize this bill as it makes its way to the House. Texans need more programs to help them afford increasing electricity costs, and we need consumer-friendly solutions, such as setting a long-term energy efficiency goal for the state of Texas.”

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