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**State of Vermont
Public Utility Commission**

**VERMONT PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION EXTENDS BAN ON
UTILITY SERVICE DISCONNECTIONS UNTIL MAY 31, 2021**

Montpelier, VT, March 31, 2021 – The Vermont Public Utility Commission (“Commission”) has again extended the moratorium that prevents the state’s regulated utilities from disconnecting utility service due to the nonpayment of electricity, natural gas, and landline phone bills. This ban on involuntary utility disconnections will now continue through May 31, 2021.

The Commission first prohibited the disconnection of utility service due to nonpayment of bills on March 18, 2020, to help protect Vermonters suffering from economic hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. That moratorium was temporarily lifted last October to encourage utility customers to apply for funds available through the Vermont COVID-19 Arrearage Assistance Program (“VCAAP”). With the moratorium suspended, utilities were able to work with their customers to secure the full \$8 million available through VCAAP to relieve some of the financial pressure on utilities and their customers. Once the VCAAP assistance program ended on December 22, 2020, the Commission reinstated the disconnection moratorium until March 31, 2021.

It is hoped that additional relief funds may again be made available to help Vermonters with past-due utility balances resulting from the pandemic, but there is no guarantee that the assistance will be repeated. Thus, while extending the moratorium today, the Commission stresses 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 does finally end.

“Extending the moratorium for a few more weeks will ensure that vulnerable Vermonters don’t lose essential services even as the end of the pandemic is in sight,” said Commissioner Margaret Cheney.

This proceeding was originally opened in response to a March 16, 2020, petition from Vermont Legal Aid “on behalf of the low-income, disabled, and elderly residents of the state.” For more information about the moratorium, please contact Kyle Landis-Marinello, General Counsel, kyle.landis-marinello@vermont.gov.

Case materials can be found by searching for Case No. 20-0703-PET in ePUC, the PUC’s online document-management system, at <https://epuc.vermont.gov/>.