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SENATE BILL NO. 431

Offered January 9, 2008

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A BILL to amend and reenact § 56-265.2 of the Code of Virginia, relating to underground placement of electrical transmission lines.

Patron—Vogel

Referred to Committee on Commerce and Labor

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 56-265.2 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 56-265.2. Certificate of convenience and necessity required for acquisition, etc., of new facilities.

A. It shall be unlawful for any public utility to construct, enlarge or acquire, by lease or otherwise, any facilities for use in public utility service, except ordinary extensions or improvements in the usual course of business, without first having obtained a certificate from the Commission that the public convenience and necessity require the exercise of such right or privilege. Any certificate required by this section shall be issued by the Commission only after opportunity for a hearing and after due notice to interested parties. The certificate for overhead electrical transmission lines of 150 kilovolts or more shall be issued by the Commission only after compliance with the provisions of § 56-46.1.

B. In exercising its authority under this section, the Commission, notwithstanding the provisions of § 56-265.4, may permit the construction and operation of electrical generating facilities, which shall not be included in the rate base of any regulated utility whose rates are established pursuant to Chapter 10 (§ 56-232 et seq.) of this title, upon a finding that such generating facility and associated facilities including transmission lines and equipment (i) will have no material adverse effect upon the rates paid by customers of any regulated public utility in the Commonwealth; (ii) will have no material adverse effect upon reliability of electric service provided by any such regulated public utility; and (iii) are not otherwise contrary to the public interest. In review of its petition for a certificate to construct and operate a generating facility described in this subsection, the Commission shall give consideration to the effect of the facility and associated facilities, including transmission lines and equipment, on the environment and establish such conditions as may be desirable or necessary to minimize adverse environmental impact as provided in § 56-46.1. Facilities authorized by a certificate issued pursuant to this subsection may be exempted by the Commission from the provisions of Chapter 10 (§ 56-232 et seq.) of Title 56.

C. A map showing the location of any proposed ordinary extension or improvement outside of the territory in which the public utility is lawfully authorized to operate shall be filed with the Commission, and prior notice of such ordinary extension shall be given to the public utility or other entity authorized to provide the same utility service within said territory. Ordinary extensions outside the service territory of a public utility shall be undertaken only for use in providing its public utility service and shall be constructed and operated so as not to interfere with the service or facilities of any public utility or other entity authorized to provide utility service within any other territory. If, upon objection of the affected utility or entity filed within thirty days of the aforesaid notice and after investigation and opportunity for a hearing the Commission finds an ordinary extension would not comply with this section, it may alter or amend the plan for such activity or prohibit its construction.

D. Whenever a certificate is required under this section for a pipeline for the transmission or distribution of natural or manufactured gas, the Commission may issue such a certificate only after compliance with the provisions of § 56-265.2:1. As used in this section and § 56-265.2:1, "pipeline for the transmission or distribution of manufactured or natural gas" shall include the pipeline and any related facilities incidental or necessary to the operation of the pipeline.

E. *Whenever a certificate is required under this section for the extension of an existing transmission line or the construction of a new electrical transmission line, the utility proposing the transmission line shall submit to the Commission a plan to install the transmission lines underground. The Commission shall not conduct hearings on an application for approval of the construction of the electrical transmission line until it has completed its review of such plan. The Commission shall condition its approval of an application for such line or lines upon the utility's agreement to install such line or lines underground if the Commission finds that underground installation of the transmission line is technologically feasible.*

F. This section shall be subject to the requirements of § 56-265.3, if any, and nothing herein shall be construed to supersede § 56-265.3.

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