

1999 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 480

Requesting the Virginia State Corporation Commission to determine whether regulations should be developed concerning electrical and gas utility facility separation.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 17, 1999

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 15, 1999

WHEREAS, in July 1998 a natural gas explosion destroyed a newly constructed home in Loudoun County; and

WHEREAS, the incident is currently under investigation by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), and the Virginia State Corporation Commission (SCC); and

WHEREAS, one issue being investigated is whether electrical cable and natural gas pipe at the Loudoun County residence may have been installed too close together; and

WHEREAS, the SCC regulates, among other things, investor-owned and member-owned electric, gas, telephone, water and sewer utilities; administers a pipeline safety inspection program; and monitors utility construction programs and service quality; and

WHEREAS, every year thousands of miles of new utility lines are placed underground in the Commonwealth, and proper separation upon installation is essential to the safe operation and maintenance of these underground utility lines; and

WHEREAS, the Utility Industry Coalition of Virginia, an industry organization of electric and gas companies, has been organized to address issues related to the initial construction separation of underground gas and electric facilities; and

WHEREAS, a two-part initiative, which includes a Voluntary Pilot Proposal for all new construction and a Utility Industry Coalition of Virginia Forum in 1999, has been proposed by the Coalition; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate to determine whether state regulations should be developed and implemented concerning appropriate separation between underground utility lines to ensure safety for Virginia's citizens; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Virginia State Corporation Commission be requested to determine whether regulations should be developed concerning electrical and gas utility facility separation. The SCC shall review and analyze preliminary and final NTSB findings concerning the Loudoun County incident, taking notice of the Voluntary Pilot Proposal which presently is underway in the community where that incident occurred; review any other actions or proposals undertaken by the Utility Industry Coalition of Virginia; seek information and assistance from public utilities within the Commonwealth, and from representatives of local governments; and review existing statutes and regulations regarding utility installation, service and maintenance.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the SCC for this study, upon request.

The Virginia State Corporation Commission shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 2000 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.

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