



Contact: Jackie Roberts, (304) 558-0526, jroberts@cad.state.wv.us

For Immediate Release

Date: February 7, 2019

PSC Staff, CAD and Appalachian Power Announce Implementation of Assistance for Low Income Electric Customers

CHARLESTON, WV – The Staff of the Public Service Commission, the PSC Consumer Advocate Division (CAD), Appalachian Power (APCo) and Wheeling Power (WPCo) today announced they have launched the Fresh Start Program previously approved by the Commission to assist low-income residents pay portions of their electric bills that are 60 or more days past due as of January 28, 2019. Other parties that participated in the design of the Fresh Start Program, and that supported its creation and the new rate design, include the City of Charleston, the Kanawha County Commission, Energy Efficient West Virginia and Mountain State Justice.

Funds for the Fresh Start Program are part of a PSC-ordered rate reduction, resulting from savings from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 (TCJA). Qualified Appalachian customers will be notified by letter. The one-time credit will appear on their bills within 30-45 days.

“This credit will make a big difference for many families struggling with their APCo electric bills,” said Jackie Roberts, West Virginia Consumer Advocate. “Many families have their highest electric bills in the winter and this will help keep families warm. The Fresh Start Fund will provide much needed assistance for our low-income families.”

In January 2018, the Commission directed all privately owned electric, gas, water, sewer and solid waste facilities to begin tracking the savings resulting from the TCJA. On August 24, 2018, the Commission approved a settlement for Appalachian Power that, in part, allowed for \$15 million to provide APCo/WPCo’s low-income West Virginia residential customers with assistance on their electric bills. Approximately \$1.6 million of that amount is being dedicated to the 2019 Fresh Start Program.

The CAD requested this program be funded from the TCJA savings, and parties to the case designed the Fresh Start Program. The PSC Staff also requested rate design changes that would lower bills for high use electric customers, which are already in place. The PSC authorized the new rate design and low income assistance.

The program will be administered by the Dollar Energy Fund, a not-for-profit organization that has administered grant funds to assist low-income residential utility customers in West Virginia since 2008. Additional information about this program is available from Dollar Energy Fund, www.dollarenergy.org/ or by calling (800) 227-8205.

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