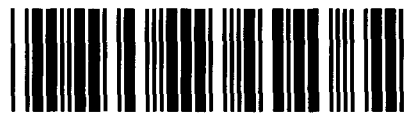




Control Number: 47896



Item Number: 3

Addendum StartPage: 0

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PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
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# OPEN MEETING COVER SHEET

**MEETING DATE:** August 9, 2018

**DATE DELIVERED:** August 2, 2018

**AGENDA ITEM NO.:** 17

**CAPTION:** Project no. 47896 - *Calendar Year 2018- Open Meeting Agenda Without an Associated Control Number*

**ACTION REQUESTED:** Discussion and possible action related to the Power to Choose website

- Distribution List:
- Commissioners' Office (9)
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  - Whittington, Pam
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  - Journey, Stephen
  - Burch, Chris
  - Tietjen, Darryl (2)
  - Long, Mick (2)
  - Competitive Markets (2)
  - Benter, Tammy (4)
  - Gonzales, Adriana (if rulemaking)

# *Public Utility Commission of Texas*

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## **Memorandum**

**TO:** Chairman DeAnn T. Walker  
Commissioner Arthur C. D'Andrea  
Commissioner Shelly Botkin

**FROM:** Chris Burch, Customer Protection Division  
Connie Corona, Competitive Markets Division

**DATE:** August 2, 2018

**RE:** **Open Meeting Item No. 17** – Discussion and possible action related to the Power to Choose website

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At the June 28, 2018, the Commission directed Staff to review the Power to Choose (PTC) website and identify changes that could improve the transparency of the shopping experience on the site. The Commission further instructed the Staff, if feasible, to execute those improvements by August 2018. Staff therefore recommends the following changes.

**Issue:** Offers are tailored mathematically to land on the first page when sorted by price. As discussed in detail at the June 28 open meeting, many plans displayed on Power to Choose are designed to show a low average price at the 1000 kWh usage level. However, when applied to typical customer usage patterns, these plans cost significantly more on average over the term of the contract. These plans may be beneficial to some customers, but not to customers who *average* 1000 kWh per month (i.e., 12,000 kWh per year).

**Recommendation:** Expand the definition of the existing “Pricing and Billing” filter on the PTC such that these plan types can be filtered from the search results. When activated, this redefined filter would exclude plans that have a minimum usage fee or credit, as well as plans that charge a different amount per kWh depending on how many kWh are used.

**Implementation timeframe:** Within one week.

**Issue:** Some REPs choose to post numerous offers on PTC that are barely distinguishable (i.e., a single REP can flood a page) meaning that a list of the “top 10” offers may only include one or two different REPs. Some REPs have as many as 30 or more offers concurrently displayed on PTC. While a REP may certainly offer as many plans as it chooses in a competitive market, this type of “flooding” behavior limits the effectiveness of PTC as a shopping tool.

**Recommendation:** Limit the number of plans that a REP may post on PTC at any one time to five per plan type (fixed, variable, indexed). Doing so will encourage REPs to use its available postings wisely, rather than repeating very similar offers to strategically dominate search results.

**Implementation timeframe:** Within three to four weeks.

**Issue:** PTC has a robust set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) about shopping in general for retail electric plans, but lacks a section specific to navigating the PTC itself.

**Recommendation:** Add a series of user friendly PDFs and videos intended to guide and inform the customer through the shopping experience in a manner that efficiently narrows the search results to the type of plan that customer prefers. The current “Narrow Your Search” function on the home page of PTC contains information that would be valuable in drafting these helpful tools.

**Implementation timeframe:** Within three to four weeks.