



Control Number: 55959



Item Number: 23

2024 MAY -2 PM 3:17

JOINT PETITION OF TEXAS ENERGY §
 ASSOCIATION FOR MARKETERS §
 AND ALLIANCE FOR RETAIL §
 MARKETS FOR DESIGNATION §
 UNDER 16 TAC § 25.475(b) §

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
 PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
 FILING CLERK
 OF TEXAS

ORDER ON APPEAL OF ORDER NO. 4

This Order addresses the appeal of Order No. 4 regarding notice of the application, filed by Texas Energy Association for Marketers (TEAM) and Alliance for Retail Markets (ARM) (collectively, the REP¹ Coalition).² According to their appeal, the REP Coalition supports notice of this proceeding through an Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) market notice and the *Texas Register*. However, the REP Coalition appeals Order No. 4's additional notice requirements requiring that:

- TEAM and ARM must publish notice of the application at least once a week for two consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in each county in which a fixed rate product affected by the petition is offered.
- TEAM and ARM must identify all of their member REPs that offer a fixed rate product affected by the petition.
- TEAM and ARM must post and maintain notice of the application on any websites they may have.
- Each REP that is a member of TEAM or ARM and that offers a fixed rate product affected by the petition must post and maintain notice of the application on its website.
- TEAM and ARM must provide proof of notice, including the notice required of their REP members.³

¹ Retail Electric Provider.

² REP Coalition's Appeal of Interim Order No. 4 (Feb. 2, 2024).

³ *Id.* (hereinafter referred to as "additional notice requirements"; notice deadlines omitted).

As discussed below, the Commission grants the REP Coalition's appeal of Order No. 4 and find that the additional notice requirements stated above are not reasonable for this proceeding.

The purpose and scope of this proceeding is a Commission determination on whether the ERCOT Contingency Reserve Service (ECRS) is an ancillary service incurring cost beyond a REP's control under 16 TAC § 25.475(b)(5).⁴ However, the additional notice requirements are based on the notice requirements applicable for a transmission and distribution utility (TDU) base-rate proceeding⁵ and are not applicable to this proceeding. This proceeding is distinguishable from a utility base-rate proceeding for the following reasons.

First, the outcome of this proceeding will not necessarily result in a price charge for customers. Rather, the Commission's ultimate determination in this proceeding is one of general applicability and will provide the competitive retail market with guidance on whether a REP can pass through a charge to its customer on an existing fixed rate contract under 16 TAC § 25.475(b)(5). A REP *may choose not to* pass through the ECRS charge to its customers on an existing fixed rate contract. Consequently, the additional notice requirements in Order No. 4 would result in unnecessary customer confusion by implying that a customer on an existing fixed rate contract is subject to a price change as a result of the outcome in this proceeding.

Moreover, in further recognition of the difference between TDUs and REPs, the Commission has extensive customer protection rules that specifically govern the relationship between REPs and their customers.⁶ Under 16 TAC § 25.475(d)(2)(A), a REP can only change the price of a fixed rate product if the Commission expressly designates a specific type of ancillary service product as a charge that is incurred beyond the REP's control. If the REP chooses to pass through the ancillary service charge, the REP must follow the notice framework in the fixed rate product's Electricity Facts Label (EFL) to effect the price change to a customer's existing fixed

⁴ Texas Energy Association for Marketers' and Alliance for Retail Markets' Joint Petition for Designation Addressing ERCOT Contingency Reserve Service at 1 (Dec. 8, 2023).

⁵ See Order No. 3 at 3 (Jan. 8, 2024) (requesting that the parties respond to whether they agree that the petition is analogous to a rate increase for fixed rate customers, and therefore, whether each REP that is a member of TEAM or ARM should be required to give notice by newspaper publication and mail as required by 16 TAC § 22.51(a)(1) and (2)); *see also* 16 TAC § 22.51(a)(1) and (2) (requiring publication of notice—in a proceeding seeking a rate increase—in a newspaper and by direct mail to the utility's customers).

⁶ See *generally*, Subchapter R, Customer Protection Rules for Retail Electric Service (found in 16 TAC § 25.471–500).

rate contract.⁷ Furthermore, 16 TAC § 25.475(d)(2)(B) requires that a REP's bill for a customer on an existing fixed rate contract must either show the price changes on one or more separate line items, or must include a conspicuous notice stating that the amount billed may include price changes allowed by law or regulatory actions.

Finally, the Commission has previously addressed notice requirements in a similar pending proceeding,⁸ where the Commission is being asked to interpret the definition of a fixed rate product in 16 TAC § 25.475(b).⁹ In Docket No. 56168, the Commission issued an Order on Certified Issues, finding that the parties that could be affected by the Commission's interpretation of 16 TAC § 25.475(b)(5) are all REPs currently serving residential or small commercial customers under a fixed rate contract.¹⁰ The Commission found that notice of the proceeding should be provided to ERCOT, the Office of Public Utility Counsel (OPUC), and ERCOT's Retail Market Subcommittee.¹¹ Therefore, consistent with the Commission's Order on Certified Issues in that docket, which did not impose additional notice requirements, the Commission finds that the additional notice requirements in Order No. 4 are not reasonable.

For the reasons discussed above, the Commission grants the REP Coalition's appeal of Order No. 4.

⁷ See 16 TAC § 25.475(d)(2)(A) ("A REP may only change the price of a fixed rate product or a variable product consistent with the definitions in this section and according to the product's EFL.").

⁸ Similar to the current proceeding, in this pending docket, the Commission's ultimate determination will not necessarily result in a price change to a customer's existing fixed rate contract.

⁹ See *Commission Staff's Petition for a Declaratory Order Interpreting 16 TAC § 25.475(b)(5)*, Docket No. 56168, Petition for a Declaratory Order at 1 (Jan. 31, 2024) (requesting the Commission clarify that a REP may not vary the price of a fixed rate product to accommodate fluctuations in securitization charges incurred by the REP.).

¹⁰ *Commission Staff's Petition for a Declaratory Order Interpreting 16 TAC § 25.475(b)(5)*, Docket No. 56168, Order on Certified Issues at 3 (Mar. 21, 2024).

¹¹ *Id.*

Signed at Austin, Texas the 2nd day of May 2024.

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF TEXAS


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