

Governor Phil Murphy

# Governor Murphy Signs Bill to Extend Prohibition on Utility Shutoffs for Certain Residential Customers

03/25/2022

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed legislation (S-2356) to extend the prohibition on utility shutoffs for certain residential customers with overdue utility payments who are waiting for a decision on their application for state assistance in paying off their utility bill arrearages.

“Over the past two years, we have implemented critical protections for residential utility customers in our state,” **said Governor Phil Murphy**. “As New Jersey continues on our road to recovery, we must provide ongoing support to residents who have been financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This legislation will keep the lights on and water running for families who are still making their way through the process of obtaining assistance from our state.”

“Our hope is that this new law spurs people who need utility assistance to complete an application as soon as possible to avoid a utility shutoff. We significantly expanded income eligibility for assistance programs this year to reach more people, including even moderate-income households,” **said Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs**. “DCA will continue its outreach efforts alongside the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities and utility companies to make sure as many people as possible know about the assistance programs and are able to submit an application prior to June 15th.”

The previous utility shutoff grace period, extended by the Governor under Executive Order No. 246 and codified under P.L.2021, c.317. for residential water, sewer, and municipal electric customers, ended on March 15, 2022. Certain residential customers of public gas and electric utilities were also protected through March 15 under the Winter Termination Program. This bill extends these protections by requiring local authorities, municipal or public utilities, and rural electric cooperatives to continue providing electric, gas, sewer or water service to residential customers who have submitted an application for utility assistance prior to June 15, 2022 but have not yet received a determination.

Residential customers will be protected for 60 days after initiating a utility assistance application to the applicable state agency, and if they complete their application in this time, will be protected until the state agency makes a decision on the application. The Department of Community Affairs (DCA), Department of Human Services (DHS), Board of Public Utilities (BPU) or any other state agency administering a utility assistance program will notify utility service providers of the customers who have applied for an assistance program and are eligible for this grace period while awaiting their application determination.

Liens also cannot be placed, sold or enforced on the property of a residential customer for unpaid utility bills while the applicable state agency determines the customer’s application for assistance. Customers will also be eligible for a 12-month interest-free deferred payment plan if they are denied assistance or if the assistance does not cover the full amount of their unpaid bills.

“The COVID pandemic has been devastating in many ways, including economic hardship for families due to the loss of a job or a reduction in income, leaving many being unable to pay their utility bills,” **said NJBPU President Joseph L. Fiordaliso**. “I commend Governor Murphy and New Jersey legislators who expanded protections for customers. The BPU will continue to work with the utilities on incorporating these changes.”

“The prohibition on utility assistance cut-offs has been invaluable to many residents during a challenging time, and while we hope for continued improved conditions, many still need this help,” **said DHS Commissioner Sarah Adelman**. “I thank the Governor for signing this bill and the bill sponsors for advocating for it. It will be immensely helpful to many residents in need.”

Primary sponsors of the legislation include Senators Brian Stack, Vin Gopal and Linda Greenstein, as well as Assembly members Raj Mukherji, Cleopatra Tucker, Paul Moriarty and Britnee N. Timberlake.

“Some utility companies have already started to shut off their customers’ utilities, I am grateful the Governor has joined us in acting urgently to protect our residents in need of assistance,” **said Senator Brian Stack**. “According to the DCA, applicants who have difficulty submitting an application take 60 days on average to complete the process because of the need to submit various required documents. This will provide that all utility assistance applicants will be protected until June 15th, regardless if their application is pending or completed. This way, no one will have their services shut off while awaiting approval for assistance from the DCA.”

“Statewide, over 850,000 residential gas and electric customers collectively owe more than \$660 million, largely due to difficulties and logistical obstacles caused by the COVID-19 pandemic,” **said Senator Vin Gopal**. “This legislation will give those residents breathing room as their assistance application is sorted out. The law will also give DCA the time necessary to properly vet and review applications, and to make determinations accordingly.”

“While COVID-19 cases have been improving, our residents are still reeling from the economic effects that the pandemic has brought on,” **said Senator Linda Greenstein**. “It is evident that many of our residents would be greatly affected by the end of the Winter Termination Program and it is critical we do not turn our backs on them during this period. This will be a huge asset in providing additional assistance to our residents as we transition out of the pandemic.”

“The past two years have been difficult for many families, leaving around 800,000 gas and electric customers in need of assistance,” **said Assemblyman Raj Mukherji**. “Since the high influx of applications has extended the timeline for the State to make prompt determinations on assistance, we must extend the grace period and provide

families with essential utilities while they await action on their applications for relief.”

“This bill will help New Jersey families to keep their utilities on while also giving the State more time to adequately address each application,” **said Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker**. “No one deserves to have their electricity or water shut off while they wait for answers.”

“Many families are still recovering financially from the pandemic and a lot of people still face employment challenges,” **said Assemblyman Paul Moriarty**. “This is absolutely necessary to ensure families throughout New Jersey continue to have access to water and electric utilities.”

“Between filling out the assistance paperwork and waiting for approval, households may have to wait several months to finally receive the aid they deserve,” **said Assemblywoman Britnee N. Timberlake**. “This is a necessary step to help many people in New Jersey keep their lights on.”

## Governor Phil Murphy

## Statewide

[Home \(/governor/\)](/governor/)

### Administration

[Governor Phil Murphy \(/governor/admin/about/\)](/governor/admin/about/)

[Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver \(/governor/admin/lt/\)](/governor/admin/lt/)

[First Lady Tammy Snyder Murphy \(/governor/admin/fl/\)](/governor/admin/fl/)

[Cabinet \(/governor/admin/cabinet/\)](/governor/admin/cabinet/)

[Office of Health Care Affordability and Transparency](/governor/admin/office-of-health-care/)

[Boards, Commissions & Authorities](/governor/admin/boards-commissions-amp-authorities/)

[Internship Opportunities](/governor/admin/internship-opportunities/)

[Governor's Residence - Drumthwacket \(http://drumthwacket.org/\)](http://drumthwacket.org/)

### Key Initiatives

[Economy & Jobs \(/governor/initiatives/#Economy\)](/governor/initiatives/#Economy)

[Education \(/governor/initiatives/#Education\)](/governor/initiatives/#Education)

[Environment \(/governor/initiatives/#Environment\)](/governor/initiatives/#Education)

[Health \(/governor/initiatives/#Health\)](/governor/initiatives/#Health)

[Law & Justice \(/governor/initiatives/#Justice\)](/governor/initiatives/#Justice)

[Transportation \(/governor/initiatives/#Transportation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Transparency \(/governor/initiatives/#Transparency\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Press Releases \(/governor/initiatives/#Press-Releases\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Photos \(/governor/initiatives/#Photos\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Public Addresses \(/governor/initiatives/#Public-Addresses\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Executive Orders \(/infobank/eo/056murphy/approved/eo\\_archive.html\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Administrative Orders \(/governor/initiatives/#Administrative-Orders\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Direct Appointments \(/governor/initiatives/#Direct-Appointments\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Advice and Consent \(/governor/initiatives/#Advice-and-Consent\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Appointments \(/governor/initiatives/#Appointments\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Statements on Legislation \(/governor/initiatives/#Statements-on-Legislation\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Administration Reports \(/governor/initiatives/#Administration-Reports\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Transition Reports \(/governor/initiatives/#Transition-Reports\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

[Press Kits \(/governor/initiatives/#Press-Kits\)](/governor/initiatives/#Transportation)

### Social

[Facebook \(https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/\)](https://www.facebook.com/governorphilmurphy/)

[Twitter \(https://twitter.com/GovMurphy\)](https://twitter.com/GovMurphy)

[Instagram \(https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/\)](https://www.instagram.com/govmurphy/)

[Snapchat \(https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy\)](https://www.snapchat.com/add/philmurphy)

[YouTube \(https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice\)](https://www.youtube.com/njgovernorsoffice)

[Contact Us \(/governor/contact/scheduling\)](/governor/contact/scheduling)

[Scheduling Requests \(/governor/contact/scheduling\)](/governor/contact/scheduling)

[Contact Us \(/governor/contact/scheduling\)](/governor/contact/scheduling)

### NJ Home

[\(/www.nj.gov\)](http://www.nj.gov)

### Services A to Z

[\(/www.nj.gov/njgov/njgov/alphaserv.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/njgov/njgov/alphaserv.html)

### Departments/Agencies

[\(/www.nj.gov/njgov/deptserv/\)](http://www.nj.gov/njgov/deptserv/)

### FAQs

[\(/www.nj.gov/faqs/\)](http://www.nj.gov/faqs/)

### Contact Us

[\(/www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/feedback.html)

### Privacy Notice

[\(/www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/privacy.html)

### Legal Statement &

### Disclaimers

[\(/www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/legal.html)

### Accessibility Statement

[\(/www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html\)](http://www.nj.gov/nj/accessibility.html)

(//nj.gov/opra/)

Copyright © State of New Jersey, 1996-2023  
Office of Governor PO Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
609-292-6000

(<https://my.state.nj.us/openam/UI/Login>)

(<https://tech.nj.gov/>)