

culpable negligence violates a provision of this section, or the rules of the commission, is guilty of a misdemeanor.

Sec. 2. Notwithstanding the provisions of Minnesota Statutes, Section 375A.13 or any other law to the contrary, the Ramsey county government study commission established pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 375A.13 and dissolved in December, 1977, shall be reestablished in the manner provided by law for the establishment of county government study commissions and shall remain in existence until January 1, 1980. The sole purpose of the commission shall be that as provided in Laws 1974, Chapter 435, Section 3.02, Subdivision 6.

Sec. 3. Laws 1974, Chapter 435, Section 1.0208, is repealed.

Sec. 4. **EFFECTIVE DATE.** This act is effective upon approval by the board of commissioners of Ramsey county and upon compliance with Minnesota Statutes, Section 645.021.

Approved April 5, 1978.

CHAPTER 746-H.F.No.1131

[Coded in Part]

An act relating to public utilities; providing for representation of consumer interests in public utility matters by the consumer services section; creating a board of residential utility consumers; appropriating money; amending Minnesota Statutes 1976, Section 45.16, Subdivision 1; and Chapter 45, by adding a section.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. Minnesota Statutes 1976, Section 45.16, Subdivision 1, is amended to read:

45.16 CONSUMER SERVICES SECTION, RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES. Subdivision 1. The section of consumer services shall have the responsibilities and duties prescribed by this section and section 2 of this act and such other authority as may be conferred by the commissioner of commerce.

Sec. 2. Minnesota Statutes 1976, Chapter 45, is amended by adding a section to read:

[45.17] REPRESENTATION OF CONSUMER INTEREST IN PUBLIC UTILITY MATTERS. Subdivision 1. DEFINITIONS. For the purposes of this section, the terms defined in this subdivision shall apply:

(1) "Public utility" means a publicly or privately owned entity engaged in supplying utility services to residential utility consumers in this state or to another public utility for

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ultimate distribution to residential utility consumers in this state and whose rates or charges are subject to approval by the public service commission or any agency of the federal government provided that no municipal or cooperative utility shall be considered a "public utility" for the purposes of this clause.

(2) "Consumer services section" means the consumer services section of the department of commerce.

(3) "Residential utility consumer" or "consumer" means a person who uses utility services at his residence in this state and who is billed by or pays a public utility for these services.

(4) "Utility services" means electricity, natural gas, or telephone services distributed to residential utility consumers by a public utility.

Subd. 2. The consumer services section shall be responsible for representing and furthering the interests of residential utility consumers through participation in matters before the public service commission involving utility rates and adequacy of utility services to residential utility consumers. The consumer services section shall expend a reasonable portion of its efforts among all three kinds of utility services and shall identify and promote the needs of each class of residential consumers with respect to each of the utility services.

Subd. 3. Subject to the limitations of subdivision 2, the consumer services section may intervene as of right or participate as an interested party in matters pending before the public service commission which affect the distribution by a public utility of utility services to residential utility consumers. The right of the consumer services section to participate or intervene shall in no way affect the obligation of the public service commission to protect the public interest.

Subd. 4. The public service commission shall give reasonable notice to the consumer services section of any matter scheduled to come before the commission affecting a public utility's rates or adequacy of services to residential utility consumers. Rules of the commission governing procedures before the commission shall apply to the consumer services section and its employees or representatives. The consumer services section shall have the same rights and privileges accorded other intervenors or participants in matters pending before the commission.

Subd. 5. The consumer services section shall be deemed to have an interest sufficient to maintain, intervene as of right in, or otherwise participate in any civil action in the trial courts or supreme court of this state for the review or enforcement of any public service commission action which affects a public utility's rates or adequacy of service to residential utility consumers.

Subd. 6. BOARD OF RESIDENTIAL UTILITY CONSUMERS. There is hereby created the board of residential utility consumers whose duties shall include:

(1) Establishing policy guidelines concerning the utility related activities of the
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commerce department's consumer services section;

(2) Reviewing and commenting upon the section's staff employment decisions related to performing the responsibilities conferred in this section; and

(3) Annually reviewing and commenting upon the consumer services section's budget of estimated expenses for utility related activities.

The board shall consist of nine voting members to be appointed by the governor. At least one member shall represent each congressional district, and at least two members shall represent farm consumers. No more than six members shall be members of the same political party. In making appointments, the governor shall give consideration to individuals having a special interest in the provision of utility services to residential consumers.

The board members shall elect from among their number a chairman and any other officers as it may deem necessary. The board shall meet at the call of the chairman or the director. The terms of office, compensation, and provisions for removal and filling vacancies of members shall be as provided in section 15.0575.

The director of the consumer services section shall submit an annual budget of estimated expenses to the board for review and comment. The director shall also periodically seek the advice of the board concerning its operations related to the responsibilities conferred by this section. The director shall also file an annual report of the section's utility related activities with the board and the legislature on or before December 31 of each year.

Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION. The sum of \$300,000 is appropriated from the general fund to the section of consumer services for the purpose of this act, to be available until June 30, 1979. The approved complement of the consumer services section is increased by seven persons.

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE. This act shall be effective the day after final enactment.

Approved April 5, 1978.

CHAPTER 747-H.F.No.1227

[Coded in Part]

An act relating to commerce; authorizing savings banks, savings associations, and credit unions to accept certain accounts; authorizing credit unions to accept deposits of public funds; providing for deposits of public funds in thrift institutions; amending Minnesota Statutes, 1977 Supplement, Section 52.04, Subdivision 1; and Minnesota Statutes 1976, Chapter 50, by adding a section; Sections 51A.21, by adding a subdivision; 118.005; 118.01; 118.09; 118.11; and 118.16; repealing Minnesota Statutes 1976, Section 118.17.

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