

Public Law 100-473
100th Congress

An Act

To provide for refunds pursuant to rate decreases under the Federal Power Act.

Oct. 6, 1988

[H.R. 2858]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Regulatory Fairness Act".

Regulatory
Fairness Act.
Utilities.
16 USC 791a
note.

SEC. 2. REFUNDS IN PROCEEDINGS UNDER SECTION 206 OF THE FEDERAL POWER ACT.

Section 206 of the Federal Power Act (16 U.S.C. 824e) is amended as follows:

(1) At the end of subsection (a) insert: "Any complaint or motion of the Commission to initiate a proceeding under this section shall state the change or changes to be made in the rate, charge, classification, rule, regulation, practice, or contract then in force, and the reasons for any proposed change or changes therein. If, after review of any motion or complaint and answer, the Commission shall decide to hold a hearing, it shall fix by order the time and place of such hearing and shall specify the issues to be adjudicated."

Contracts.

(2) Designate subsection (b) as (d) and insert the following new subsections after subsection (a):

"(b) Whenever the Commission institutes a proceeding under this section, the Commission shall establish a refund effective date. In the case of a proceeding instituted on complaint, the refund effective date shall not be earlier than the date 60 days after the filing of such complaint nor later than 5 months after the expiration of such 60-day period. In the case of a proceeding instituted by the Commission on its own motion, the refund effective date shall not be earlier than the date 60 days after the publication by the Commission of notice of its intention to initiate such proceeding nor later than 5 months after the expiration of such 60-day period. Upon institution of a proceeding under this section, the Commission shall give to the decision of such proceeding the same preference as provided under section 205 of this Act and otherwise act as speedily as possible. If no final decision is rendered by the refund effective date or by the conclusion of the 180-day period commencing upon initiation of a proceeding pursuant to this section, whichever is earlier, the Commission shall state the reasons why it has failed to do so and shall state its best estimate as to when it reasonably expects to make such decision. In any proceeding under this section, the burden of proof to show that any rate, charge, classification, rule, regulation, practice, or contract is unjust, unreasonable, unduly discriminatory, or preferential shall be upon the Commission or the complainant. At the conclusion of any proceeding under this section, the Commission may order the public utility to make refunds of any amounts paid, for the period subsequent to the refund effective date through a date fifteen months after such refund effective date, in

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excess of those which would have been paid under the just and reasonable rate, charge, classification, rule, regulation, practice, or contract which the Commission orders to be thereafter observed and in force: *Provided*, That if the proceeding is not concluded within fifteen months after the refund effective date and if the Commission determines at the conclusion of the proceeding that the proceeding was not resolved within the fifteen-month period primarily because of dilatory behavior by the public utility, the Commission may order refunds of any or all amounts paid for the period subsequent to the refund effective date and prior to the conclusion of the proceeding. The refunds shall be made, with interest, to those persons who have paid those rates or charges which are the subject of the proceeding.

“(c) Notwithstanding subsection (b), in a proceeding commenced under this section involving two or more electric utility companies of a registered holding company, refunds which might otherwise be payable under subsection (b) shall not be ordered to the extent that such refunds would result from any portion of a Commission order that (1) requires a decrease in system production or transmission costs to be paid by one or more of such electric companies; and (2) is based upon a determination that the amount of such decrease should be paid through an increase in the costs to be paid by other electric utility companies of such registered holding company: *Provided*, That refunds, in whole or in part, may be ordered by the Commission if it determines that the registered holding company would not experience any reduction in revenues which results from an inability of an electric utility company of the holding company to recover such increase in costs for the period between the refund effective date and the effective date of the Commission’s order. For purposes of this subsection, the terms ‘electric utility companies’ and ‘registered holding company’ shall have the same meanings as provided in the Public Utility Holding Company Act of 1935, as amended.”.

16 USC 824e
note.

SEC. 3. LIMITATION ON AUTHORITY PROVIDED.

Nothing in subsection (c) of section 206 of the Federal Power Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 824e(c)) shall be interpreted to confer upon the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission any authority not granted to it elsewhere in such Act to issue an order that (1) requires a decrease in system production or transmission costs to be paid by one or more electric utility companies of a registered holding company; and (2) is based upon a determination that the amount of such decrease should be paid through an increase in the costs to be paid by other electric utility companies of such registered holding company. For purposes of this section, the terms “electric utility companies” and “registered holding company” shall have the same meanings as provided in the Public Utility Holding Company Act of 1935, as amended.

16 USC 824e
note.

SEC. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE.

The amendments made by this Act are not applicable to complaints filed or motions initiated before the date of enactment of this Act pursuant to section 206 of the Federal Power Act: *Provided, however*, That such complaints may be withdrawn and refiled without prejudice.

SEC. 5. STUDY.

16 USC 824e
note.

No earlier than three years and no later than four years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission shall perform a study of the effect of the amendments to section 206 of the Federal Power Act made by this Act. The study shall analyze (1) the impact, if any, of such amendments on the cost of capital paid by public utilities; (2) any change in the average time taken to resolve proceedings under section 206; and (3) such other matters as the Commission may deem appropriate in the public interest. Upon completion the study shall be sent to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Committee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Representatives.

Approved October 6, 1988.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY—H.R. 2858:

HOUSE REPORTS: No. 100-384 (Comm. on Energy and Commerce).

SENATE REPORTS: No. 100-491 (Comm. on Energy and Natural Resources).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

Vol. 133 (1987): Oct. 27, considered and passed House.

Vol. 134 (1988): Sept. 8, considered and passed Senate, amended.
Sept. 23, House concurred in Senate amendment.