

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2004 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**

Senate Bill 380  
Finance

(Senator Jones, *et al.*)

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**Public Service Companies - Customer Accounts**

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This bill requires individuals to present specified identification to open or alter accounts with public service companies. The bill provides that public service companies are liable for charges made to an account if the public service company did not require the specified identification to open or alter the account.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The bill would not materially affect State government operations.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Bill Summary:** The bill provides that individuals may not open an account with a public service company without first producing identification in the form of a Social Security number or driver's license number. Individuals will not be permitted to open an account with a public service company in another individual's name unless: (1) the individual has obtained and produced to the public service company written authorization from the individual named on the account; or (2) the individual seeking to open the account is also named on the account.

The bill requires public service companies to require an individual to produce identification in the form of a personal identification number, Social Security number,

driver's license number, or password prior to permitting an individual from making changes to an existing customer account with a public service company or receive information about an existing customer account. In addition to any other remedies provided by law, if a public service company fails to obtain identification from an individual in violation of the bill, the public service company is responsible for any charges to an account that are incurred as a result of the creation of an unauthorized account or of an unauthorized change.

**Current Law:** The Code of Maryland Regulations provides that when the name of the person applying for service from an electric company or gas company (respectively) is different from the name of the applicant, when more than one name is to be on an account, or when there is a reasonable basis for questioning the authority of a person requesting service in the name of the applicant, the utility may request that the applicant or applicants appear at the utility's designated office, present satisfactory identification, and execute a written application for service. The regulation also provides that a utility may require a customer to provide a written, signed statement attesting to an order, decree, or agreement formalizing a name change, but may not request a copy of the actual order, divorce decree, or separation agreement.

**Background:** Utilities may already request the information covered under the provisions of this bill. Potomac Electric Power Company does not currently require that an individual provide the specific personal identifying information.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Public Service Commission, Office of People's Counsel, Potomac Electric Power Company, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 23, 2004  
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Analysis by: Daniel P. Tompkins

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510