

House Research Act Summary

CHAPTER: 125

SESSION: 1999 Regular Session

TOPIC: Public Utilities Commission Operations

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Overview

Chapter 125 makes changes in the way the five member Public Utilities Commission can perform its assigned work. The authority granted to the commission to adopt new processes to do its work sunsets on June 30, 2002.

Section

- 1 Certain findings approved without a hearing.** Authorizes the commission to approve certain filings with the commission without taking formal action except publicizing notice of the approval. Any person can object to the process and if an objection is made within 60 days of filing, the filing cannot be approved by this process. Complaint filings, petitions to increase rates, and rule making petitions are not eligible for approval under this process. The commission may designate certain other types of filings as eligible for the approval process.
- 2 Subcommittees.** Authorizes the commission to create and appoint members to subcommittees of at least one member. The commission may delegate any of its functions to a subcommittee. However, a party or a participant may block the delegation by filing an objection and in that case the full commission must decide the matter. If a delegation to a subcommittee is authorized, a subcommittee decision may be objected to in writing by a party or a participant or by a commissioner and in that case the full commission must also decide the matter. In such a case, the full commission can rely on the record created by the subcommittee. If no written objection is filed within ten days after the full commission receives the decision of a subcommittee, however, a subcommittee decision is deemed a full commission decision.
- 3 Lead commissioner.** Authorizes the commission to designate a lead commissioner for a docket, a type of docket, or for a particular subject area. Prior to making a designation for a particular docket, a party or participant may request that a lead commissioner not be designated for that docket. If designated, the lead commissioner may develop a record and preside at hearings without the involvement of any other commissioner. The lead commissioner is not authorized to

issue binding commission decisions. Any findings of fact, conclusions of law, or recommendations of the lead commissioner are advisory only and a final decision by the commission is required. Even if a lead commissioner is designated, a contested case hearing can still be requested pursuant to chapter 14.

4 **Sunset.** Sunsets the authority granted by the act on June 30, 2002.

5 **Effective date.** Provides an immediate effective date for the entire act.