
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7243

AN ACT CONCERNING REQUIREMENTS FOR APPOINTMENTS OF UTILITY COMMISSIONERS TO THE PUBLIC UTILITIES REGULATORY AUTHORITY AND SUBSTANTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST OF SUCH UTILITY COMMISSIONERS.

SUMMARY

This bill creates additional qualification requirements for appointees to the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA). It also specifies certain conflicts of interest requiring PURA commissioners to recuse themselves from matters and extends, from one to five years, the “cooling off period” when a former commissioner cannot work for PURA-regulated companies or their lobbyists.

Under existing law, appointees to PURA must have education or training and at least three years of experience in at least one of the following fields: economics, engineering, law, accounting, finance, utility regulation, public or government administration, consumer advocacy, business management, and environmental management. And at least three of these fields must be represented by individual PURA commissioners at all times.

The bill additionally requires any appointments made on and after October 1, 2025, to ensure that at least (1) one member has expertise in economics, accounting, forensic auditing, or financial regulation; (2) one member has experience in utility customer advocacy, with public service or administration experience; and (3) one member has a law degree with experience in administrative or utility regulatory law. (Current law also requires one member to have experience in utility customer advocacy, but does not specify public service or administration experience.)

The bill also (1) requires that at least half of PURA’s commissioners have no prior employment with a PURA-regulated entity and (2)

disqualifies a person from being a PURA commissioner if he or she (a) is an executive of a company or other entity that received a notice of violation from PURA or an equivalent agency or (b) has been an executive or principal of a company or other entity that engaged in litigation with PURA or an equivalent agency.

Existing law generally prohibits PURA commissioners from having any interest or engaging in any business, employment, transaction, or professional activity that is in substantial conflict (as defined in the state ethics laws) with the commissioner's duties for any matter within PURA's jurisdiction. The bill specifies that a commissioner who was employed in a PURA-regulated profession for at least one year has a substantial conflict of interest in matters concerning his or her former employer, or an entity affiliated with the employer, for a five-year period after the employment ended. The bill requires such a commissioner to recuse himself or herself from participating in any matter concerning the employer or affiliated entity during this five-year period.

Lastly, the bill extends, from one to five years after serving as a PURA commissioner, the period during which a former commissioner cannot be employed by (1) a PURA-regulated utility company; (2) a certified telecommunications provider; (3) an electric supplier; or (4) any person, firm, or corporation lobbying over the governmental regulation of any of those entities.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2025

BACKGROUND

Substantial Conflict of Interest

Under the state's code of ethics, public officials have a substantial conflict of interest (and cannot take official action) if they have reason to believe or expect that they, their spouse or dependent child, or a business they are associated with will derive a direct monetary gain or suffer a direct monetary loss due to their official activity. However, a substantial conflict of interest does not exist if the monetary gain or loss is no greater than the gain or loss realized by any other member of the

same profession, occupation, or group (CGS § 1-85).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 13 Nay 6 (03/26/2025)