

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

State of Arkansas As Engrossed: S1/26/21 S2/1/21 S2/9/21 S3/2/21
93rd General Assembly
Regular Session, 2021

A Bill

SENATE BILL 23

By: Senator B. Johnson
By: Representative L. Fite

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
CORPORATION SELF-REGULATION ACT OF 2021; AND FOR
OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO ESTABLISH THE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
CORPORATION SELF-REGULATION ACT OF 2021.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 23-18-201 is amended to read as follows:
23-18-201. Jurisdiction of commission generally.

~~Electric~~ Except as specifically provided by law or if an electric
cooperative corporation has selected self-regulation as provided in § 23-18-
308, an electric cooperative corporations corporation generating,
manufacturing, purchasing, acquiring, transmitting, distributing, selling,
furnishing, and disposing of electric power and energy in this state ~~pursuant~~
~~to~~ under the Electric Cooperative Corporation Act, § 23-18-301 et seq., ~~shall~~
~~be~~ is subject to the general jurisdiction of the Arkansas Public Service
Commission ~~in the same manner and to the same extent as provided by law for~~
~~the regulation, supervision, or control of public utilities except as~~
~~provided in this subchapter.~~

SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 23-18-308 is amended to read as follows:
23-18-308. Legislative findings and intent - Jurisdiction of
commission.



(a) The General Assembly finds that a corporation organized under this subchapter:

(1) Is owned by the member-consumers that the corporation serves; and

(2) Is regulated by the member-consumers through an elected and governing board of directors.

(b) It is the intent of the General Assembly that it is in the public interest to allow self-regulation for a corporation organized under this subchapter.

(c) All corporations organized under this subchapter ~~shall be in all respects~~ ~~is~~ ~~subject to the jurisdiction, supervision, regulation, and control of the Arkansas Public Service Commission to the same extent and in the same manner as a public utility, except as otherwise specifically provided by law~~ ~~or if a corporation has selected self-regulation as described in subsection (d) of this section.~~ ~~A corporation~~ ~~is~~ ~~subject to the jurisdiction, supervision, regulation, and control of the Arkansas Public Service Commission to the same extent and in the same manner as a public utility, except as otherwise specifically provided by law~~ ~~or if a corporation has selected self-regulation as described in subsection (d) of this section.~~ is subject to the jurisdiction, supervision, regulation, and control of the Arkansas Public Service Commission to the same extent and in the same manner as a public utility, except as otherwise specifically provided by law or if a corporation has selected self-regulation as described in subsection (d) of this section.

(d) Excluding a generation and transmission cooperative as defined in § 23-4-1101, the right of self-regulation and exemption from the jurisdiction of the commission may be selected by the members of a corporation if:

(1)(A) At least ninety (90) days before a vote on self-regulation, the corporation notifies the corporation's membership of the plan to conduct a vote of member-consumers regarding self-regulation.

(B) The notice described in subdivision (d)(1)(A) of this section shall:

(i) Be sent via postal mail to each member-consumer's account using the address on file; and

(ii) Include:

(a) A summary of the vote proposed and the reasons for the vote to be taken;

(b) Dates, times, and locations for at least three (3) opportunities for member-consumer comments, which shall occur before the vote is taken, including instructions for how to submit electronic comments to the corporation; and

(c) The procedure necessary for the member-consumer to cast a vote.

(C) The corporation shall post notice of the vote in accessible locations, including without limitation the corporation

newsletter, website, or other regular methods of member-consumer communication;

(2) A vote on self-regulation and exemption occurred according to the corporation's relevant governance documents;

(3) A majority of votes cast were in favor of self-regulation and exemption; and

(4) The corporation notifies the commission, in writing, of the results of the membership vote of the corporation within sixty (60) days of the declaration of the results.

(e) After following the procedure in subsection (d) of this section, once a majority of the votes cast are in favor of becoming self-regulated under this subchapter, then the process to become self-regulated shall begin as soon as possible and shall be completed within twelve (12) months of the majority vote to become self-regulated.

(f) A corporation that becomes self-regulated under this subchapter shall:

(1)(A) Set its own rates, terms, and conditions for service in a manner that reasonably approximates the costs of providing service to the respective classes of service of the corporation.

(B) For any changes in rates, a member-consumer shall be provided advance notice of at least ninety (90) days through the same communication channel the member-consumer selects for receiving billing; and

(2) Ensure the rates, terms, and conditions for service of the corporation are available for access on the website of the corporation or other member-accessible locations as well as those locations on file with the commission for informational purposes as listed in the commission-designated docket.

(g) Any corporate action undertaken in good faith while the corporation acts in a self-regulated capacity is valid and effective as if determined by the commission.

(h)(1) A corporation that becomes self-regulated under this subchapter may resubmit to the jurisdiction of the commission if:

(A) The membership of a corporation requests a return to the jurisdiction of the commission as follows:

(i) The commission or the corporation receives a petition from at least ten percent (10%) of the corporation's member-

consumers, as defined in § 23-4-901, requesting that the corporation return to the jurisdiction of the commission, following the same form and procedures as described in § 23-4-904; and

(ii) The commission orders the corporation or the corporation decides to conduct a membership vote regarding returning to the jurisdiction of the commission using the same procedure described in subsection (d) of this section; or

(B) The corporation's board of directors holds a membership vote on the return to the jurisdiction of the commission using the same procedure described in subsection (d) of this section.

(2) After following the procedure in subdivision (h)(1)(A) or subdivision (h)(1)(B) of this section, if a majority of the votes cast are in favor of returning to the jurisdiction of the commission, then:

(A) The process to return the corporation to the jurisdiction of the commission shall begin as soon as possible after the membership vote; and

(B) Unless otherwise ordered by the commission, a corporation's return to the jurisdiction of the commission shall be completed within twelve (12) months of the majority vote to return to commission jurisdiction.

(i) The commission shall retain jurisdiction over a corporation that becomes self-regulated under this subchapter for:

(1) Areas of service established in § 23-18-101;

(2) Siting of transmission facilities subject to a requirement for a certificate of public convenience and necessity under §§ 23-3-201 – 23-3-205 or under the Utility Facility Environmental and Economic Protection Act, § 23-18-501 et seq., if the property for the facility will be acquired by the corporation using the power of eminent domain;

(3) Proceedings brought by a member or consumer of the corporation regarding quality of service;

(4) Pole attachments as described in § 23-4-1001 et seq.;

(5) Ad valorem tax assessments as described in § 26-26-1601 et seq.;

(6) Net metering as defined in the Arkansas Renewable Energy Development Act of 2001, § 23-18-601 et seq.; and

(7) Demand response as defined in the Regulation of Electric

Demand Response Act, § 23-18-1001 et seq.

(j) A self-regulated corporation shall not use its status as a monopoly electric service provider to:

(1) Make the provision of electric service conditional upon the nonelectric service offerings of the corporation; or

(2) Offer consideration to induce a member-consumer to switch from another public utility's service to the service of the corporation.

(k)(1) This subchapter does not conflict with:

(A) Section 14-207-101 et seq. or otherwise affect the rights of a municipal electric utility, as defined in the Arkansas Municipal Electric Utility Interlocal Cooperation Act of 2003, § 25-20-401 et seq., relating to extensions of service or otherwise;

(B) The Broadband Over Power Lines Enabling Act, § 23-18-801 et seq.;

(C) Commission funding provisions described in §§ 23-3-309 and 23-3-310;

(D) Section 23-3-114(a) concerning the prohibition of unreasonable preferences or disadvantages for rates and service between classes of service; and

(E) Other laws pertaining to public utilities that do not address the jurisdiction or authority of the commission over a self-regulated corporation.

(2) If another provision of Arkansas law conflicts with this subchapter concerning the jurisdiction or authority of the commission over a self-regulated corporation, then this subchapter controls.

SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 23-18-331 is amended to read as follows:

23-18-331. Service in incorporated areas.

(a)(1) The inclusion by incorporation, annexation, or otherwise of any portion of a rural area assigned to ~~corporations~~ a corporation within the limits of an incorporated or unincorporated city, town, or village, regardless of its population, shall not ~~in any respect~~ impair or affect the rights of ~~the corporations under their certificates of convenience and necessity~~ a corporation under their commission approved service territory certificate to continue and extend electric service in the included areas.

(2) Notwithstanding any other provisions of law, ~~the~~

~~corporations shall be~~ a corporation is entitled to continue and extend service ~~therein~~ under the same terms and conditions as those contained in the franchise or indeterminate permit of any other supplier of electric service in the city, town, or village the same as though it were a party to the franchise or indeterminate permit.

~~(b)(1) A corporation which serves an area within the limits of any municipality under the terms of this subchapter shall as to that area be subject in all respects to the jurisdiction of the Arkansas Public Service Commission to the same extent and in the same manner as it is subject to such jurisdiction in areas outside the limits of municipalities.~~

~~(2) Any such~~ A city, town, or village shall have the same authority to impose taxes, charges, or fees in respect to the business of a corporation conducted within the corporate limits of ~~such~~ the city, town, or village as it has in respect to business conducted by other suppliers of electric service.

~~(c) Nothing in this section shall in any manner~~ This section does not restrict or impair the right of ~~any~~ a municipality to acquire, construct, expand, maintain, or operate any electric generation, transmission, or distribution facilities within the corporate limits of the city, town, or village in Arkansas as ~~such~~ the limits ~~may~~ of the city, town, or village now exist or as ~~such~~ the limits of the city, town, or village may exist upon the extension or expansion of the city limits of the city, town, or village.

/s/B. Johnson