

No. 1977-85

AN ACT

HB 1196

Amending the act of May 28, 1937 (P.L. 1053, No. 286), entitled "An act relating to the regulation of public utilities; defining as public utilities certain corporations, companies, associations, and persons; providing for the regulation of public utilities, including, to a limited extent, municipalities engaging in public utility business, by prescribing, defining, and limiting their duties, powers, and liabilities, and regulating the exercise, surrender or abandonment of their powers, privileges, and franchises; defining and regulating contract carriers by motor vehicle and brokers in order to regulate effectively common carriers by motor vehicle; conferring upon the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission the power and duty of supervising and regulating persons, associations, companies, and corporations, including, to a limited extent, municipal corporations subject to this act, and administering the provisions of this act; authorizing the commission to fix temporary rates; placing the burden of proof on public utilities to sustain their rates and certain other matters; authorizing a permissive or mandatory sliding scale method of regulating rates; providing for the supervision of financial and contractual relations between public utilities and affiliated interests, and supervision and regulation of accounts and securities or obligations issued, assumed, or kept by persons, associations, companies, corporations or municipal corporations subject to this act; conferring upon the commission power to vary, reform, or revise certain contracts; conferring upon the commission the exclusive power to regulate or order the construction, alteration, relocation, protection, or abolition of crossings of facilities of public utilities, and of such facilities by or over public highways, to appropriate property for the construction or improvement of such crossings, and to award or apportion resultant costs and damages; authorizing owners of such property to sue the Commonwealth for such damages; providing for ejectment proceedings in connection with the appropriation of property for crossings; conferring upon the commission power to control and regulate budgets of public utilities; imposing upon persons, associations, companies, and corporations (except municipal corporations) subject to regulation, the cost of administering this act; prescribing and regulating practice and procedure before the commission and procedure for review by the courts of commission action; giving the court of common pleas of Dauphin County exclusive original jurisdiction over certain proceedings; prescribing penalties, fines, and imprisonment for violations of the provisions of this act and regulations and orders of the commission, and the procedure for enforcing such fines and penalties; and repealing legislation supplied and superseded by or inconsistent with this act," further providing for refunds.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

Section 1. Subsection (a) of section 313, act of May 28, 1937 (P.L. 1053, No. 286), known as the "Public Utility Law," repealed in part June 3, 1971 (P.L. 118, No. 6), is amended to read:

Section 313. Refunds.—(a) If, in any proceeding involving rates, the commission shall determine that any rate received by a public utility was unjust or unreasonable, or was in violation of any regulation or order of the commission, or was in excess of the applicable rate contained in an existing

and effective tariff of such public utility, the commission shall have the power and authority to make an order requiring the public utility to refund the amount of any excess paid by any patron, in consequence of such unlawful collection, within ~~[two]~~ *four* years prior to the date of the filing of the complaint, together with interest at the legal rate from the date of each such excessive payment. In making a determination under this section, the commission need not find that the rate complained of was extortionate or oppressive. Any order of the commission awarding a refund shall be made for and on behalf of all patrons subject to the same rate of the public utility. The commission shall state in any refund order the exact amount to be paid, the reasonable time within which payment shall be made, and shall make findings upon pertinent questions of fact.

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Section 2. This act shall take effect immediately.

APPROVED—The 1st day of December, A. D. 1977.

MILTON J. SHAPP