

STATE SENATOR • MARTHA G. SCOTT • 2ND DISTRICT

Scott Press Release

P.O. Box 30036 • Lansing • Michigan • 48909-7536 • 517-373-7748 • Fax: 517-373-1387
E-mail: senmscott@senate.michigan.gov • www.senate.mi.gov/scott



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Contact: Sen Martha G. Scott
Phone: (517) 373-7748

SENATOR SCOTT FIGHTS TO PROTECT CONSUMERS FROM WINTER UTILITY SHUTOFFS

New legislative package would regulate utility shutoffs, advocate for consumer safety

LANSING, Michigan - Senate Democrats will be introducing a bipartisan legislative package that will protect Michigan residents by banning dangerous winter utility shutoffs and regulating other shutoff practices, including banning the use of service limiters like the one that recently caused the death of a Bay City man.

“During these dangerously cold winter months, I have been contacted by so many - too many - constituents on the verge of having their heat turned off because they cannot pay their bill,” said State Senator Martha G. Scott (D-Highland Park). “Many of these have been seniors or families with children. We need to extend additional protection to these citizens during the winter to guarantee that no one freezes to death on our watch.”

The bills in the shutoff protection plan will:

- Permanently outlaw winter shutoffs for all utilities from December 1 to March 31.
- Require a utility company to give all customers at least 15 days notice before shutoff through a certified letter or delivery of a shutoff notice in person before cutting power.
- Ban the use of electric service limiters in Michigan until the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) is able to develop proper, uniform standards regarding their use.
- Expand the authority of the MPSC to include all utilities, including municipalities, for regulating shutoffs.

The package will also require a utility provider to include information on government, company or other assistance programs that are available with any utility service shutoff notice, and establish penalties for improperly shutting off a utility service. This may include a fine to the utility company that goes into the Low Income & Energy Efficiency Fund, which provides shutoff and other protections for low-income consumers and promotes energy efficiency, as well as possibly ordering a customer refund.

Senators are seeking to act swiftly to protect Michigan residents during the brutally cold winter months in the hope of preventing tragedies like the death of Marvin Schur, a 93-year-old World War II veteran in Bay City. Mr. Schur was found frozen to death in his

home last month after Bay City Electric Light & Power, a municipal utility not subject to MPSC rules, placed an electric limiter on his home. Tragedy struck again last week when two children died in a Fruitport Township house fire caused by kerosene heaters that were being used to heat the home after the gas company shut off service.

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Senator Scott represents the 2nd Senate District, which includes areas of Detroit and the cities of Hamtramck, Harper Woods, Highland Park and all of the Grosse Pointes. She serves on the Senate Appropriations Committee.