

For Immediate Release

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PSC Expresses Concern for Ratepayers Amidst Calls to Uphold Paris Accord

HELENA, Mont. – The Montana Public Service Commission today took its first step towards resolving the protracted debate over net-metering in Montana.

The Commission is seeking input on a set of draft criteria to be included in a cost-benefit study of customer-generators that will be conducted by NorthWestern Energy.

HB 219, sponsored by Rep. Zach Brown (D-Bozeman), signed into law earlier this year, requires NorthWestern to complete a comprehensive study on the costs and benefits associated with customer-generators by April 1, 2018. The bill authorizes the Commission to establish minimum information requirements to be included in the utility's analysis.

Chairman Johnson (R- East Helena) stressed that early involvement from stakeholders is critical to ensure the study returns meaningful results.

"Now is the time to ask the tough questions," he said. "If we wait until after the study is complete to argue that something is missing it will be too late."

The PSC's notice asks commenters to provide feedback on a long list of possible benefits and costs to be studied. These include benefits such as avoided energy and capacity the utility otherwise would have to buy, and costs such as integrating solar or wind energy onto the utility network.

It also directs NorthWestern to provide the PSC an overview of the data the company has already collected on how customer-generator's consumption profile differs from a typical consumer that does not have a net-metering arrangement.

Those customers who have interconnected net-metering systems prior to a Commission order that establishes new classifications of service for customer-generators will be exempt from the changes.

The Commission invites interested persons to submit written comments addressing the potential benefit and cost elements and study questions contained in the *Notice of Opportunity to Comment* **no later than July 7, 2017**, either by mail or hand delivered to the Commission at

1701 Prospect Avenue, Helena, MT, 59620, or by email to psc_utilitycomment@mt.gov. Comments can also be submitted through the Commission's web-based comment form at <http://psc.mt.gov> ("Comment on Proceedings").

To view the *Notice of Opportunity to Comment*, visit: <http://psc.mt.gov/Docs/ElectronicDocuments/pdfFiles/D2017649NOC.pdf>

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