

This press release has been updated. [You can find the previous version here.](#)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 8, 2020

CONTACT: Courtney Naquin, [courtney.naquin@sierraclub.org](mailto:courtney.naquin@sierraclub.org), (409) 779-7949

Kaiba White, [kwhite@citizen.org](mailto:kwhite@citizen.org), (607) 339-9854

## **Organizations Compel Gov. Greg Abbott to Suspend All Utility Disconnections in Texas During COVID-19 Emergency**

**Austin, TX--** Sierra Club, Public Citizen and several other legal aid and justice organizations [sent a joint letter to Texas Governor Greg Abbott](#) late Tuesday calling on him to issue an executive order to ensure all Texas residents, regardless of their location or ability to pay, have electricity and water service during the indefinite COVID-19 emergency.

Sierra Club and Public Citizen sent a separate joint letter to the Public Utility Commission (PUC) of Texas last week pressuring the PUC to issue a moratorium on statewide utility shut-offs for eligible Texans unable to pay their bills as a result of the COVID-19 emergency. While the PUC did issue a temporary moratorium for water and electricity disconnections as a result of nonpayment, *the order did not include municipally-owned utilities or cooperatives*. This means that thousands of Texans living in rural areas are more vulnerable to utility shut-offs during this public health crisis.

“To cut off Texans’ utilities is to jeopardize public health. In order for everyone to follow Governor Abbott’s Stay at Home Order and CDC guidelines and to feel comfortable staying home and practicing social distancing, people need access to water and electricity. It’s that simple,” **said Cyrus Reed, Conservation Director and Interim Director of Sierra Club’s Lone Star Chapter.** “Governor Abbott needs to issue an executive order to suspend all utility shut-offs statewide. This will bridge the gap left by the PUC’s actions which excluded municipally-owned utilities and cooperatives, and ensure that all Texans have access to water and electricity.”

The organizations are also calling on Gov. Abbott to require utilities to reconnect any residential customers who were previously disconnected, and that these policies remain in effect for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency.

“Texans need security during this unprecedented crisis and reassurance that their basic needs, including access to water and electricity, will be met,” **said Kaiba White, energy policy and outreach specialist in Public Citizen’s Texas Office.** “Thousands of people across the state, in both rural and urban areas, have suffered financial hardship because of COVID-19 related business closures, and may no longer have the means to pay their bills. In order to protect all

Texans, Governor Abbott needs to step up and issue this executive order to include municipally-owned utilities and cooperatives.”

###