

1 S.41

2 Introduced by Senators Pollina, Cummings, Doyle, Fox, and McCormack

3 Referred to Committee on

4 Date:

5 Subject: Municipal and county government; uniform water and sewer
6 disconnect; rental dwellings

7 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to allow tenants
8 to establish water and sewer service for a rental dwelling if the landlord is
9 delinquent in paying for the service.

10 An act relating to water and sewer service

11 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

12 Sec. 1. 24 V.S.A. § 5143 is amended to read:

13 § 5143. DISCONNECTION OF SERVICE

14 * * *

15 (c) A tenant of a rental dwelling facing a disconnection due to the
16 delinquency of the landlord shall have the right to establish water and sewer
17 service for the rental dwelling in the tenant's name and to deduct the cost of
18 the water and sewer service from his or her rent pursuant to 9 V.S.A. § 4458.

19 (d) Prior to disconnection, the municipal water utility shall ask the
20 ratepayer or occupant whether a tenant resides in the dwelling. A municipal

1 water utility shall not disconnect a dwelling at the request of a lessor, owner, or
2 agent or because the landlord has failed to pay an overdue amount if it has
3 reason to believe the dwelling is rented and unless the municipal utility gives
4 notice as described in subsection (e) of this section.

5 (e) A municipal utility shall with respect to each potentially affected
6 dwelling unit, deliver a notice consistent with the provisions of this chapter
7 prior to the scheduled disconnection to at least one adult occupant of that
8 dwelling unit or mail a notice to the tenant of that dwelling unit. In buildings
9 where service to two or more units is to be disconnected because of a
10 landlord's request or nonpayment, the utility must also post the notice in a
11 secure and obvious place in the affected building or buildings. The notice
12 must, in addition to the applicable disclosures of section 5144 of this chapter,
13 inform the tenant how service can be continued. Notwithstanding the notice
14 provisions of this chapter, a disconnection notice containing a newly
15 established disconnection date shall be provided to the tenant at least ten days
16 prior to the newly established disconnection date. If the disconnection is due
17 to the failure of the landlord to pay an overdue amount, the landlord shall be
18 responsible for usage during the additional ten-day notice period.

19 (f) A municipal utility shall offer the tenant the opportunity either to obtain
20 service in the tenant's name or to otherwise assume responsibility for further
21 payment. If the building has a single master meter for the whole building, the

1 utility must make arrangements where possible to provide individual meters to
2 separate dwelling units. Where the wiring and metering arrangements allow,
3 the utility must provide service upon request of the tenant. The utility may not
4 require the tenant to pay any of the bill owed to the utility by the landlord.

5 (g) If the utility disconnects a household because it is not aware that the
6 household is occupied by the tenant, and the landlord is responsible for
7 payment of the utility bill, the utility must reinstate service upon notification
8 from the tenant. Under such circumstances, the utility shall not require
9 advance payment of any deposit, and the customer shall have the option of
10 paying the deposit, if required, in three equal payments, with one-third due in
11 15 days, one-third due in 30 days, and one-third due in 60 days.

12 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

13 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2013.