

48:2-29.17

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY CHECKLIST

NJSA 48:2-29.17 ("Lifeline: utilities program -- increase amount of credit)

LAWS 1981 CHAPTER 292

Bill No. A3149

Sponsor(s) Doyle

Date Introduced February 9, 1981

Committee: Assembly Revenue, Finance and Appropriations

Senate Revenue, Finance and Appropriations

Amended during passage Yes No Substituted for S3129 (not attached since identical to A3149)

Date of Passage: Assembly March 2, 1981

Senate April 27, 1981

Date of approval September 28, 1981

Following statements are attached if available:

Sponsor statement Yes No (Below)

Committee Statement: Assembly Yes No

Senate Yes No

Fiscal Note Yes No

Veto Message Yes No

Message on signing Yes No

Following were printed:

Reports Yes No

Hearings Yes No

Sponsor's statement:

This bill increases from \$125.00 to \$150.00 the gas and electric bill credit provided under the "Lifeline Credit Program" to eligible Senior Citizens and disabled persons. In addition, this bill increases the credit to \$175.00 beginning in October 1982, subject to available funds.

6/22/81

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ASSEMBLY, No. 3149

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 9, 1981

By Assemblyman DOYLE

Referred to Committee on Revenue, Finance and Appropriations

AN ACT concerning utility bill credits and amending P. L. 1979,
c. 197.

1 BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
2 *of New Jersey:*

1 1. Section 3 of P. L. 1979, c. 197 (C. 48:2-29.17) is amended to
2 read as follows:

3 3. The "Lifeline Credit Program" shall consist of **[a]** *an annual*
4 credit **[of \$125.00]** against the electric or gas utility bill of each
5 eligible residential electric or gas customer at his principal resi-
6 dence. Such credit shall be applied to the electric or gas utility
7 bills of such customer as soon as may be practicable, but in no case
8 later than the bills issued in October of each year or as soon
9 thereafter as eligibility is determined, and shall be applied to each
10 subsequent utility bill after the first until the full amount of the
11 credit is exhausted. No household shall receive more than *one annual*
12 **[\$125.00]** credit. In the event that electric and gas are provided
13 to the same customer by the same utility, the total annual credit
14 shall be applied to the combined bills from such utility. In the
15 event that electric and gas are provided to the same customer by
16 two separate utilities, half of the total annual credit shall be
17 applied to the bills from each such utility. *The annual credit shall*
18 *be \$150.00.* Subject to the availability of appropriations, the level
19 of credit shall be increased to **[\$150.00]** *\$175.00* beginning in
20 October, **[1981]** *1982.*

1 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 1981.

STATEMENT

This bill increases from \$125.00 to \$150.00 the gas and electric bill credit provided under the "Lifeline Credit Program" to eligible senior citizens and disabled persons. In addition, this bill increases the credit to \$175.00 beginning in October, 1982, subject to available funds.

EXPLANATION—Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

ASSEMBLY REVENUE, FINANCE AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 3149

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: FEBRUARY 19, 1981

This bill increases from \$125.00 to \$150.00 the gas and electric bill credit provided under the "Lifeline Credit Program" available to eligible senior citizens and disabled persons. Further, that credit is increased to \$175.00 beginning in October 1982, subject to availability of appropriations.

SENATE REVENUE, FINANCE AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 3149

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: APRIL 27, 1981.

Assembly Bill No. 3149 increases from \$125.00 to \$150.00 the gas and electric bill credit provided under the "Lifeline Credit Program" to eligible senior citizens and disabled persons. The State budget for fiscal year 1981-82 includes a funding recommendation for the program in an amount sufficient to provide \$150.00 per recipient for 250,000 recipients.

The bill also directs that, subject to the availability of funds, the credit be increased to \$175.00 beginning in October, 1982 (State fiscal year 1982-83).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

SEPTEMBER 28, 1981

JOHN FARMER

TOMS RIVER - Governor Brendan Byrne today signed legislation increasing the yearly lifeline utility credit for senior citizens, at a time, he said, when older Americans face a growing threat from Washington.

The legislation, A-3149, sponsored by Assemblyman John Paul Doyle (D-Ocean), increases to \$150 from the present \$125 the payment for senior citizens and disabled persons as a credit against electric or gas utility bills.

The new law is the latest in a series of measures to protect and improve the living standards of New Jersey's senior citizens, Byrne said.

It comes at a time, he said, when the Reagan administration, not content with earlier reductions in domestic spending programs, proposes a 12 percent across-the-board cut in a broad range of critical domestic programs, according to the state's Washington office. This cut, if approved by Congress, would cost New Jersey \$25.6 million in low income energy assistance, much of it directed at senior citizens.

In funds for low income and senior housing alone, the Reagan administration proposes to give New Jersey more than \$1 million less next year than the Carter administration provided in its final budget.

In addition, the Reagan Administration proposes to further reduce funds for foodstamps, Medicare, veterans benefits and Supplemental Security Income by amounts still not clear, Byrne said.

"What is clear," the Governor said, "is the apparent indifference of those in Washington to the needs of a broad cross-section of Americans, including our senior citizens. It highlights the importance of the role of state government in protecting the welfare of our older citizens at a critical time."

Three state programs alone, Byrne said, have pumped some \$285 million into support for senior citizens. These include \$30 million in reduced bus fare for seniors and the disabled; \$85.5 million under the Lifeline Credit programs in just two years, fiscal 1980 and 1981; and \$170.3 million in Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged since 1976.

But this is only a portion of the state's effort.

Senior citizens under a Byrne administration program receive an extra \$50 credit on their homestead rebate. Basic Property Tax exemption for those over 65 have amounted to millions of dollars under a program that will double the income limit and increase the maximum reduction annually over a four year period.

The dedication of casino revenues to programs for the elderly underscores the state's commitment to its older citizens, Byrne declared. "If those funds were not available this year, several existing programs for the elderly would have suffered deep cuts," the Governor said. "Contrary to the claims of some critics these casino funds were used to preserve senior citizens programs and were not diverted to other uses."

In addition, those over 65 can deduct an extra \$1,000 from their taxable income for state income tax purposes - a program that saved seniors approximately \$3.5 million a year.

Not all of the state's programs for the elderly can be measured in purely dollar terms, the governor declared. He cited legislation during his terms that created a Boarding Home Bill of Rights and Licensing Act; that established a state ombudsman for the institutionalized elderly, and that affords the elderly greater protection from condominium conversion.

"One measure of the just society," Byrne said, "is how well or poorly it cares for its elderly, those who have labored in the past to provide a secure life for us today. The Republican administration in Washington has shown how little it cares. Let us at the state level take care not to make the same mistake."

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