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John B. Rhodes, Chair

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New York’s Electric and Gas Utilities to Provide Helping Hand to Furloughed and Unpaid Federal Employees

— Added Benefits Made Available to Federal Employees Financially Squeezed by Federal Government Partial Shutdown —

ALBANY —The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) announced today that New York’s major electric and gas utilities are implementing special collection practices for customers furloughed and those working without pay due to the Federal government shutdown. The State’s major utilities: National Grid, Consolidated Edison, Central Hudson, Orange and Rockland, New York State Electric and Gas, Rochester Electric and Gas, PSEG Long Island and National Fuel Gas have all committed to assist federal employees who may be experiencing a financial hardship that makes it difficult for them to pay their energy bills during the government shutdown. Importantly, these utilities have all committed to keeping these provisions in place for the duration of the shutdown and until they get paid.

“The Federal Government shutdown is already taking a serious toll on many government workers and their families,” **said Commission Chair John B. Rhodes.** “I want to thank New York’s utilities for their prompt response and sensitivity to the growing hardships these families are facing. Their actions will help ensure that New York’s Federal Government workers will not have to worry about keeping their homes warm and their lights on.”

The major utilities are providing this assistance to affected federal workers on a voluntary basis. The utilities’ action comes at just the right time as the Northeast enters into what is generally the coldest stretch of the winter season. Now these families will not be forced to choose between heating their homes and their other vital needs.

While the specific provisions will vary by utility, some of these special practices include: suspending or waiving late payment fees; extending or deferring payment due dates; and, crafting deferred payment agreements tailored to each affected customer’s financial circumstances. These special practices will not only help furloughed and unpaid working federal government employees avoid the possibility of having their energy services turned off but will also help these customers avoid lowering their credit ratings because of circumstances beyond their control.

Affected Federal government employees are encouraged to reach out to their utility’s Credit Department or customer service departments if they are unable to pay their bill. The utilities may place a collection suspend on accounts, suspend collection calls and disconnect notices; and waive late fees. Additionally, collection arrangement or deferred payment agreement will be structured as required if the shutdown is extended and balances exceed the customer’s ability to pay.