

(3) A final decision of the Circuit Court shall be reviewable by appeal directly to the Court of Appeals of Maryland. Any such appeal shall be taken by the filing of a notice of appeal within 10 days after the entry of the final decision.

(4) It shall be the duty of the Circuit Court and the Court of Appeals to advance on the docket and to expedite to the greatest possible extent the disposition of the action and the appeal.

(5) No State funds may be spent directly or indirectly by any officer or unit of State government to challenge any provision of this Act, or to pay private counsel to challenge any provision of this Act, in a State court or federal court.

SECTION 20. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, notwithstanding § 7-510(c)(3) of the Public Utility Companies Article, as enacted by this Act:

(1) (a) an electric company is allowed to recover the costs of electricity for which it has contracted before the effective date of this Act to provide standard offer service; ~~and,~~

~~(2) an electric company that is collecting an authorized reasonable return for providing standard offer service under an extension of the obligation to provide that service in a service territory in which a rate cap or freeze under § 7-505(d) of the Public Utility Companies Article is no longer in effect may continue to collect the return until the termination of the extension.~~

(b) (1) This paragraph subsection applies to an investor-owned electric company in a service territory in which a rate cap or freeze under § 7-505(d) of the Public Utility Companies Article is no longer in effect and which has a rate mitigation plan in effect on July 1, 2006 for residential customers, in accordance with an order by Order No. 80747 of the Public Service Commission, to limit the increase in the total electric rates to 15% on June 1, 2006, allow a 15.7% increase on March 1, 2007, allow for residential customers to pay market rates at a later date, and begin paying for the recovery of the deferred amount on June 1, 2007, with recovery of the deferred amount over 18 months.

(2) The Public Service Commission shall require, through the modification of the existing order, the electric company to provide after July 1, 2006, an additional time period in which residential customers may opt in to the rate mitigation plan.

(3) Subject to paragraphs (4), (5), and (6) of this subsection, the electric company may continue to collect an authorized reasonable return for providing standard offer service under an extension of the obligation to provide that service as approved by the Public Service Commission.

(4) The electric company shall apply the authorized reasonable return revenue to any actual carrying charges that the electric company may incur as a result of the deferred amounts from customers who have opted in to the rate mitigation plan.

(5) In accordance with paragraph (6) of this subsection, if the participation rate of the number of customers who have opted in to the rate mitigation