

(ii) criteria to evaluate bids that are submitted for energy and conservation measures and services.

(3) As a part of its review of electric restructuring in the State as it pertains to the availability of competitive generation to residential and small commercial customers and the structure, procurement, and terms and conditions of standard offer service for residential and small commercial customers, the Commission shall:

1. adopt a uniform definition of a "small commercial customer" for purposes of standard offer service that applies in all service territories in the State; and

2. consider whether it benefits small commercial customers for an electric company not to be required to provide the standard offer service under § 7-510(c) for small commercial customers.

(e) The requirement to study opt-out local governmental aggregation under subsection (b)(5) of this section may not be construed to interfere with any pilot program to implement local aggregation in existence on the effective date of this Act.

SECTION 8. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, notwithstanding the rate cap imposed in accordance with § 7-505(d) of the Public Utility Companies Article and implementing settlement agreements and orders, the Public Service Commission, on its own initiative or on request of an electric company in the service territory of which a rate cap or freeze expires after July 1, 2006, shall initiate a proceeding to investigate options available to implement a rate mitigation plan or rate stabilization plan, including renegotiation of a settlement agreement to allow a portion of the residential electric supply in that service territory to be procured at market rates earlier than otherwise provided in the settlement agreement so that the full residential electricity rates in that service territory are not exposed to volatile market conditions at one time, while ensuring that residential customers in that service territory obtain the full value of the savings provided under the existing rate cap.

SECTION 9. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

(a) (1) The State Department of Assessments and Taxation shall study whether the current valuation of power plants in the State for property tax purposes and any proposed change to the current method of valuation provides an adequate and equitable determination of the value of power plants in a restructured electric industry.

(2) The study shall include the potential fiscal impact to the State, counties, and electric companies and their affiliates of any proposed change to the current method of valuation.

(b) In conducting the study under subsection (a) of this section, the Department shall hire a consultant with expertise in plant valuation.

(c) The Department shall report to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, to the General Assembly on or before December 31, 2006, on its findings and recommendations.