

Consumer Corner

Texans Have The Power To Choose

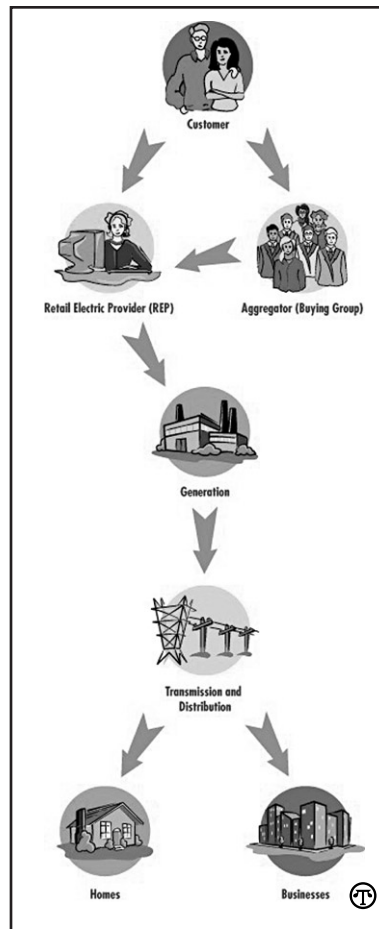
(NAPSA)—Many people believe competition brings out the best in everything.

That's the thinking behind legislation that provides customers of Texas' investor-owned utilities the right to choose an electric provider that is best for their needs beginning January 1, 2002. Competition should result in lower prices and help speed the development of new products and services. Other benefits include the construction of new, cleaner power plants and an increased development of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar energy.

In the past, customers obtained all of their electric needs from one company. In the competitive market, customers will have greater control over their electricity choices. The generation and the retail sale (customer service) portion of the power industry has been deregulated. Electric Choice gives customers the ability to select a Retail Electric Provider (REP) based on prices, contract terms, incentives, or environmental considerations. REPs will contract with generation companies to provide customers power. Electricity will continue to be delivered over the same poles and wires used today. The current utility, or Local Distribution Utility (LDU), will continue to restore service in the event of an outage. The Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) will continue to enforce customer protections and will regulate the delivery of electricity to ensure safe and reliable electric service.

Some customers will have the opportunity to choose a new REP as early as this summer through a Pilot Program. The Pilot Program is designed to test the compatibility of communication and computer systems. Through the Pilot Program, 5 percent of the states' electric customers may choose a REP before competition begins for everyone in January 2002.

The ability to choose a new



In Texas, electricity providers now act as a broker of power to homes and businesses.

REP may not be available to all Texas customers. Lawmakers gave city-owned utilities and electric cooperatives the right to decide whether or not they want to give their customers a choice of providers. Customers should also keep in mind that the right to choose a new REP is optional. Customers who do not participate will be provided service by the REP that is affiliated with their current utility.

To learn more about the Texas Electric Choice program, visit www.powertochoose.org or call toll free 1-866-PWR-4-TEX or 1-866-797-4839.

Editor's Note: Although utility deregulation is being tested throughout the country, Texas Electric Choice is available only within the state of Texas.