

Resolution on Energy Efficiency and Innovative Rate Design

WHEREAS, The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), at its July 2003 Summer Meetings, adopted a *Resolution on State Commission Responses to the Natural Gas Supply Situation* that encouraged State and Federal regulatory commissions to review the incentives for existing gas and electric utility programs designed to promote and aggressively implement cost-effective conservation, energy efficiency, weatherization, and demand response; *and*

WHEREAS, The NARUC at its November 2003 annual convention, adopted a *Resolution Adopting Natural Gas Information "Toolkit,"* which encouraged the NARUC Natural Gas Task Force to review the findings and recommendations of the September 23, 2003 report by the National Petroleum Council on *Balancing Natural Gas Policy – Fueling the Demands of a Growing Economy* and its recommendations for improving and promoting energy efficiency and conservation initiatives; *and*

WHEREAS, The NARUC at its 2004 Summer Meetings, adopted a *Resolution on Gas and Electric Energy Efficiency* encouraging State commissions and other policy makers to support expansion of energy efficiency programs, including consumer education, weatherization, and energy efficiency and to address regulatory incentives to inefficient use of gas and electricity; *and*

WHEREAS, These NARUC initiatives were prompted by the substantial increases in the price of natural gas in wholesale markets during the 2000-2003 period when compared to the more moderate prices that prevailed throughout the 1990s; *and*

WHEREAS, The wholesale natural gas prices of the last five years largely reflect the fact that the demand by consumers for natural gas has been growing steadily while, for a variety of reasons, the supply of natural gas has had difficulty keeping pace, leading to a situation where natural gas demand and supply are narrowly in balance and where even modest increases in demand produce sharp increases in price; *and*

WHEREAS, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, in addition to damaging the States of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas, significantly damaged the nation's onshore and offshore energy infrastructure, resulting in significant interruption in the production and delivery of both oil and natural gas in the Gulf Coast area; *and*

WHEREAS, The confluence of a tight balance of natural gas supply and demand and these natural disasters has driven natural gas prices in wholesale markets to unprecedented levels; *and*

WHEREAS, The present high and unprecedented level of natural gas prices are imposing significant burdens on the nation's natural gas consumers, whether residential, commercial, or industrial, and will likely be injurious to the nation's economy as a whole; *and*

WHEREAS, The recently enacted Energy Policy Act of 2005 contains a number of provisions aimed at encouraging further natural gas production in order to bring down prices for consumers,

but these actions, together with any further action on energy issues by Congress, are unlikely to bring forth additional supplies of natural gas in the short term; *and*

WHEREAS, Energy conservation and energy efficiency are, in the short term, the actions most likely to reduce upward pressure on natural gas prices and to assist in bringing energy prices down, to the benefit of all natural gas consumers; *and*

WHEREAS, Innovative rate designs including “energy efficient tariffs” and “decoupling tariffs” (such as those employed by Northwest Natural Gas in Oregon, Baltimore Gas & Electric and Washington Gas in Maryland, Southwest Gas in California, and Piedmont Natural Gas in North Carolina), “fixed-variable” rates (such as that employed by Northern States Power in North Dakota, and Atlanta Gas Light in Georgia), other options (such as that approved in Oklahoma for Oklahoma Natural Gas), and other innovative proposals and programs may assist, especially in the short term, in promoting energy efficiency and energy conservation and slowing the rate of demand growth of natural gas; *and*

WHEREAS, Current forms of rate design may tend to create a misalignment between the interests of natural gas utilities and their customers; *now therefore be it*

RESOLVED, That the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC), convened in its November 2005 Annual Convention in Indian Wells, California, encourages State commissions and other policy makers to review the rate designs they have previously approved to determine whether they should be reconsidered in order to implement innovative rate designs that will encourage energy conservation and energy efficiency that will assist in moderating natural gas demand and reducing upward pressure on natural gas prices; *and be it further*

RESOLVED, That NARUC recognizes that the best approach toward promoting energy efficiency programs for any utility, State, or region may likely depend on local issues, preferences, and conditions.

Sponsored by the Committee on Gas

Recommended by the NARUC Board of Directors November 15, 2005

Adopted by the NARUC November 16, 2005