



EL PASO COUNTY STATE OF TEXAS

RESOLUTION



WHEREAS, the County of El Paso strives to enhance the health, safety, and quality of life for their residents and all Texans; and

WHEREAS, a freezing weather event commonly called Winter Storm Uri moved through Texas in February 2021, dropping temperatures below freezing or near-freezing for three days; and

WHEREAS, power outages occurred throughout much of the State as a result, causing millions of people to lose electricity, which resulted in many losing heat while temperatures dropped well below freezing, and directly causing more than 70 deaths in Texas that are known as of the time of this resolution; and

WHEREAS, in February 2011, freezing temperatures also caused blackouts, resulting in a report by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and the North American Electric Reliability Corporation that expressed that winterization procedures were inadequate and warned that Texas would experience similar blackouts again if they did not make the necessary investments to address these problems; and

WHEREAS, El Paso provides energy to its residents through the Western grid and under 900 people were affected for only minutes by the energy outages in El Paso; and

WHEREAS, Texas has its own power grid that services 90% of the state outside of El Paso, and this Texas Interconnect was designed with the intent of creating an intrastate grid that avoids jurisdiction of federal regulation, which would fall to FERC; and

WHEREAS, regulation of the Texas grid falls primarily to the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT), wholly appointed by the governor, which has the power to create and enforce standards, such as those proposed in the 2011 FERC report for winterization of facilities, upon energy providers; and

WHEREAS, the Texas Railroad Commission, an elected body, is responsible for the regulation of the oil and gas industry and had the power to create and enforce standards such as winterization upon pipelines; and

WHEREAS, neither PUCT nor the Texas Railroad Commission substantially acted in the decade between the 2011 FERC report and the 2021 winter storm to prepare for freezing weather; and

WHEREAS, Texas has experienced several natural and climate disasters in the last decade and needs to fully prepare its infrastructure for future events; and

WHEREAS, electricity is a vital resource, and Texans deserve a system that is reliable, and has public oversight going forward; and without regulation, energy industries will continue to profit from disasters like Winter Storm Uri.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the El Paso County Judge and Commissioners Court that we join our peer Texas counties in the call for Gov. Abbott and other state leaders to immediately implement the 2011 recommendations from FERC, implement a complete overhaul of our energy system to ensure public oversight and regulation and preparedness for future climate crises, and provide direct aid to local governments and residents on the frontlines of the humanitarian crisis still unfolding across our state.

SIGNED, this 8th day of March 2021

Commissioner Carlos Leon, Pct. 1

Commissioner David C. Stout, Pct. 2

Commissioner Iliana Holguin, Pct. 3

Commissioner Carl L. Robinson, Pct. 4

Ricardo A. Samaniego, County Judge