

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1816

As Reported by House Committee On:
Technology, Energy & Communications

Title: An act relating to changing provisions related to wireless phone numbers used by directory providers.

Brief Description: Regarding wireless phone numbers used by directory providers.

Sponsors: Representatives Morrell, Bailey, Eddy, Rodne, Crouse and Hudgins.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Technology, Energy & Communications: 2/11/09, 2/16/09 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Removes provisions requiring directory providers to conduct an investigation and obtain a subscriber's opt-in consent before including the subscriber's wireless phone number in a directory.
- Provides that wireless telephone companies and directory providers must remove a subscriber's wireless phone number from a directory upon request.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, ENERGY & COMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 16 members: Representatives McCoy, Chair; Eddy, Vice Chair; Crouse, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Carlyle, Condotta, Finn, Hasegawa, Herrera, Hinkle, Hudgins, Jacks, McCune, Morris, Takko and Van De Wege.

Staff: Kara Durbin (786-7133)

Background:

In 2005 the Legislature enacted a provision that restricted wireless telephone companies from publishing a subscriber's wireless phone number in a directory without first obtaining the subscriber's opt-in consent. Subscribers may not be charged for choosing not to be listed in a

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directory. These restrictions were limited to wireless telephone companies and did not restrict third parties from including a subscriber's wireless phone number in a directory.

In 2008 similar restrictions were extended to directory providers. Directory providers may not include a Washington resident's phone number in a directory of any form without first undertaking a reasonable investigation as to whether that phone number is a wireless phone number. An investigation is presumed to be reasonable if the directory provider compares the phone number every 30 days against either: (1) a commercially available list of central office code assignment records offered through the North American Numbering Plan (NANP) or other similar service; or (2) a commercially available list of intermodal ports of telephone numbers. If an investigation reveals that a phone number is a wireless phone number, the directory provider cannot include the number in a directory without first obtaining the subscriber's opt-in consent.

A provider of a reverse phone number search service must allow a subscriber to perform a reverse phone number search free of charge to determine whether the subscriber's wireless phone number is listed. If the subscriber's wireless phone number is listed in a reverse phone number search service, the subscriber may opt-out of having their number included in the reverse phone number search service. The subscriber cannot be charged for opting out of having their wireless phone number listed.

Any violation of these reverse phone number search service provisions is a violation of the Consumer Protection Act.

Any provider of a directory maintained before June 12, 2008, must secure opt-in consent from each subscriber listed in the directory or remove the wireless phone numbers of any subscribers who have not provided opt-in consent. This requirement does not apply to:

- a directory provider if it cannot be determined upon reasonable investigation whether the phone number is a wireless phone number;
- a directory provider that has obtained the number from a wireless telephone company that already secured opt-in consent from the subscriber; or
- a person that publishes a subscriber's wireless phone number that was ported from listed wireline service to wireless service within the previous 15 months.

The Attorney General may bring an action to enforce compliance with any of these provisions. The Attorney General may send a warning letter for a first violation.

A wireless telephone company that lists a wireless phone number in a directory without obtaining the subscriber's opt-in consent is punishable by a fine of at least \$2,000, but no more than \$50,000 for each violation.

A directory provider that lists a wireless phone number in a directory without obtaining the subscriber's opt-in consent is punishable by a fine of up to \$50,000, unless a reasonable investigation was conducted and the directory provider was unable to determine whether the phone number was a wireless phone number.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Directory providers are no longer required to conduct a reasonable investigation as to whether a phone number is a wireless phone number before including a phone number in a directory, nor must they obtain opt-in consent from a subscriber before listing a subscriber's wireless phone number in a directory. Provisions requiring directory providers to secure opt-in consent for directories in existence before June 12, 2008, are repealed.

Directory providers and wireless telephone companies must remove a subscriber's wireless phone number from a directory upon request. The wireless phone number must be removed within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 60 days for printed directories and 30 days for online directories. Failure to remove a wireless phone number within a reasonable period of time is punishable by a fine of up to \$50,000.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill expands the existing exemption from the bill for law enforcement, fire protection, and health agencies to include any activities related to carrying out their official duties. The use of wireless phone numbers pursuant to the Fair Credit Reporting Act or the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act is exempt. Exemptions in existing law related to phone numbers obtained directly from a wireless telephone company that has obtained opt-in consent, or phone numbers published in a directory for commercial purposes, are restored in the substitute bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Wireless phone numbers are more prevalent than ever before. It is hard to come up with a workable solution that protects privacy. After much consideration, I decided to pursue an opt-out model instead. Last year's law was too narrow for law enforcement purposes. The proposed substitute bill restores some of the exemptions that were needed. It is important that we protect individuals who want their wireless phone number removed from a directory. We support removal of the database search and the opt-in requirements. This approach is much simpler.

(Opposed) Our businesses provide services to locate fugitives, witnesses, organ donors, and other beneficial uses. It is very difficult for large database operators to scan documents and try to take wireless phone numbers out of those documents when they need to stay whole. We would like to see the bill exclude public records when obtained and given out in substantially the same format. Our business is currently suppressing all wireless phone

numbers associated with Washington residents in order to comply with the directory provider requirements under existing law. Using those phone numbers is important to be able to confirm identify for fraud protection. Verification has become even more important with the portability of phone numbers.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Morrell, prime sponsor; and Bryce Yaclon, Whitepages.com.

(Opposed) Eric Ellman, Consumer Data Industry Association; Terry Jennings, Reed Elsevier; Eric Rosenberg, TransUnion; Murray Johnson, Experian; and Steve Gano, AT&T.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.