

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESSB 5156

FULL VETO

As Passed Legislature

Brief Description: Promoting competition for long distance telecommunications.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Energy, Telecommunications & Utilities (originally sponsored by Senators Sutherland, Gaspard, Sellar, Hochstatter and Loveland).

Senate Committee on Energy, Telecommunications & Utilities

House Committee on Energy & Utilities

Background: In 1982, a federal court mandated the break-up of the Bell telephone system. Under the court's decree, which became effective in 1984, local exchange companies (LECs) are limited to providing telephone services within defined local geographic zones known as local access transport areas (LATAs). By contrast, long distance companies may operate between LATAs (inter-LATA), and provide any other telephone services, subject to certain conditions.

In Washington, long distance companies have been permitted to provide intra-LATA telephone services so long as their customers dial a four-digit access code to direct the call through the long distance company.

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) is considering proposals to authorize long distance companies to provide intra-LATA service by presubscription, without requiring a four-digit access code. Such proposals have raised concerns of competitive imbalance in the telecommunications marketplace, insofar as LECs are barred by federal law from competing in the inter-LATA market.

Summary: The WUTC may not require changes in current intra-LATA dialing patterns until such times as all carriers, including LECs, are authorized to provide intra-LATA service, or June 30, 1998, whichever is earlier.

The WUTC must submit to the Legislature by December 1, 1997, a study reviewing the intra-LATA and inter-LATA long distance markets, applicable laws and regulations, and the impact upon telephone rates and the public interest of proposed changes in rules governing intra-LATA services.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	41	7
House	87	10