

FINAL BILL REPORT

SB 6400

C 159 L 98

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Extending the Washington telephone assistance program through 2003.

Sponsors: Senators Brown, Finkbeiner, Oke and Thibaudeau; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

Senate Committee on Energy & Utilities

House Committee on Energy & Utilities

Background: The Washington Telephone Assistance Program (WTAP) expires on June 30, 1998, unless extended by the Legislature. It was originally created in 1987, as the Lifeline Assistance Program— to assist low-income persons in obtaining basic telephone services. The program was reauthorized by the Legislature in 1993. It is administered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

In order to be eligible for assistance under WTAP, a person must be an adult recipient of DSHS administered programs for the financially needy. Participants receive a 50 percent discount on connection fees, deposit waivers, and are charged a discounted flat rate for basic telephone service.

WTAP is funded by an excise tax on all switched access lines and by funds from the federal government or other sources. A statutory ceiling of 14 cents per month per line exists on the excise tax. The current rate, established by the Utilities and Transportation Commission, is 13 cents per line per month.

Summary: The Washington Telephone Assistance Program is extended until June 30, 2003.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	47	0
House	98	0

Effective: June 11, 1998