

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2914

As Reported By House Committee On:
Technology, Telecommunications & Energy

Title: An act relating to telecommunications customers.

Brief Description: Creating a telecommunications clearinghouse.

Sponsors: Representatives Poulsen, Bush, Ruderman, Morris, DeBolt, Reardon, Kastama, Cooper and Veloria.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Technology, Telecommunications & Energy: 1/28/00 [DP].

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Creates an information clearinghouse of telecommunications calling plans.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS & ENERGY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Crouse, Republican Co-Chair; Poulsen, Democratic Co-Chair; DeBolt, Republican Vice Chair; Ruderman, Democratic Vice Chair; Bush; Cooper; Delvin; Kastama; McDonald; Morris and Reardon.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Thomas.

Staff: Julia Harmatz (786-7135).

Background:

Some states, such as Wisconsin and California, have contracted with third party web sites to coordinate and maintain their local telephone calling plan information. These websites are referred to as clearinghouses for telecommunication information.

Examples of these sites are:

www.abelltolls.com
www.trac.org
www.salestar.com

The consumers may be requested to input specific information found on their phone bill. The information requested may include the time of day calls are usually placed, duration of an average call, and area codes commonly called. Based on the information, the clearinghouse presents tables of information relative to that consumer.

Summary of Bill:

Attorney General

The attorney general will establish and manage an internet site that will show calling plans and other telecommunications information. The attorney general is permitted to contract with a private party to maintain the site.

Information

The information on the clearinghouse site will include at a minimum:

- Calling plans: residential and business;
- interlata and intralata (local access and transport areas) plans; and
- dial around (10-10---).

The clearinghouse will also contain detailed information such as:

- Billing increments;
- variances in costs due to time of day and week;
- monthly charges; and
- periodic minimum costs.

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

The commission will provide certain data to the site such as the current:

- Federal and state surcharges and fees;
- federal and state Universal charges;
- explanations of the alternative titles used by companies to identify these charges and fees; and

- complaint contact information.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 24, 2000.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: The clearinghouse would filter out the barrage of information and serve as a solid effort to assist consumers. Since 1997, complaints have tripled with regard to long distance calling plans. Consumers do not understand the calling plan products they are purchasing. The clearinghouse identifies a need that consumers have for better information.

(Questions) There are already web sites like this out there for free, so there is no need for the government to repeat these efforts.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: (Support) Simon Ffitch, Attorney General's office; and Rick Mattoon, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission.

(Questions) Bruce Shaull, Sprint.