
Commerce & Labor Committee

HB 3197

Brief Description: Prohibiting paper billing fees.

Sponsors: Representatives Chase, Hunt and Conway.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires business entities that use paper bills to charge customers for services to provide a customer with one paper copy of the customer's regular bill each billing cycle at no additional cost to the customer.

Hearing Date: 2/1/06

Staff: Sarah Dylag (786-7109).

Background:

Paper Billing Fees

Some companies charge customers a fee each billing cycle if the customer receives a paper copy of the customer's regular bill.

Consumer Protection Act

The state's Consumer Protection Act (CPA) was enacted in 1961 to provide civil remedies for damages related to unfair methods of competition and unfair or deceptive acts or practices in the conduct of trade and commerce. The CPA allows an injured party to file a civil claim to prevent further violations and to recover actual damages, costs, and attorney fees. The court has discretion to increase an award of damages up to an amount three times the actual damages sustained. The Attorney General also may bring an action to enjoin an activity prohibited under the CPA.

Summary of Bill:

A business entity that uses paper bills to charge customers for services provided must provide a customer with one paper copy of the customer's regular bill each billing cycle at no additional cost to the customer.

A violation of this requirement is a violation of the Consumer Protection Act.

Rulemaking Authority: The bill does not contain provisions addressing the rule-making powers of an agency.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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