
SENATE BILL 5536

State of Washington

52nd Legislature

1991 Regular Session

By Senators Thorsness, Rasmussen, Madsen, L. Kreidler, A. Smith, Erwin, Newhouse, Jesernig, Sutherland, Saling, Bauer and Stratton.

Read first time February 5, 1991. Referred to Committee on Energy & Utilities.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing the telecommunications devices for
2 the deaf task force; creating new sections; and making an
3 appropriation.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that:

6 (1) Operation of the state-wide telecommunications devices for the
7 deaf (TDD) relay service has become an integral and important part of
8 the state's telecommunications network;

9 (2) The Washington state TDD relay service (WSTRS) has, since it
10 began twenty-four-hour operation in November 1989, provided pioneering
11 service to the deaf, hearing-impaired, and speech-impaired citizens of
12 this state by utilizing the best available technology;

13 (3) In its report to the legislature in December 1990, the
14 department of social and health services identified a number of major
15 issues and alternative approaches for the continued operation of the

1 WSTRS, including blockage rate, limitations on demand for system usage,
2 funding, operational structure, toll call billing, regional systems
3 with other states, and technological changes;

4 (4) The federal Americans with disabilities act (ADA), enacted in
5 July 1990, requires that state-wide TDD relay services must be
6 available in every state by July 1993, and must comply with the
7 requirements of the federal legislation and with regulations to be
8 adopted by the federal communications commission by July 1991; and

9 (5) It is in the best interests of the citizens of this state that
10 the provision of state-wide TDD relay services in Washington be
11 assessed in light of the new federal requirements, the ongoing problems
12 and issues identified in the department of social and health services
13 report, and potentially cost-effective technological improvements.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The telecommunications devices for
15 the deaf (TDD) task force is created, consisting of the secretary of
16 the department of social and health services and the director of the
17 department of information services, or their designees, and the chair
18 of the utilities and transportation commission, or his or her designee.
19 The utilities and transportation commission shall serve as the lead
20 agency of the task force.

21 (2) The task force shall create a working group that includes
22 representatives of a broad range of affected interests, including
23 telecommunications companies engaged in both interstate and intrastate
24 communications, the hearing-impaired communities and agencies, and the
25 speech-impaired community and agencies. To the extent possible, the
26 members of the working group should be persons that have been or are
27 members of the TDD advisory committee established under RCW 43.20A.730.
28 The working group shall provide information, advice, and technical
29 assistance to the task force.

1 (3) The task force shall report to the energy and utilities
2 committees of the house of representatives and the senate by December
3 15, 1991, on its findings and recommendations. The report shall, at a
4 minimum, address the following:

5 (a) The requirements of the Americans with disabilities act, and
6 the regulations promulgated by the federal communications commission to
7 implement the act, including federal requirements as to funding
8 mechanisms, blockage rate, and confidentiality;

9 (b) The issues identified in the December 1990 report of the
10 department of social and health services with regard to the operation
11 of the Washington state TDD relay service, and particularly alternative
12 operation and management structures, the utility of new cost-effective
13 technology, regional cooperation with other states, competition and
14 access to a variety of local carriers, utilization of the state's SCAN
15 lines, and line blockage;

16 (c) The advantages and disadvantages of allowing carriers to
17 determine how they should meet the requirements of the Americans with
18 disabilities act, or whether the state should take the lead in devising
19 or maintaining a state-wide TDD relay system that would meet those
20 requirements; and

21 (d) Whether the task force should continue its work on issues that
22 are complex, where there appears to be no consensus on any proposed
23 direction or solution, or where the requirements of federal law have
24 not been made clear.

25 The report shall contain recommendations or alternatives for
26 legislative action.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** The sum of twenty thousand dollars, or
28 as much thereof as may be necessary, is appropriated for the biennium
29 ending June 30, 1993, from the general fund to the utilities and

1 transportation commission for the purposes of this act.