
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6656

State of Washington

58th Legislature

2004 Regular Session

By Senate Committee on Technology & Communications (originally sponsored by Senators Schmidt and Esser; by request of Utilities & Transportation Commission and Department of Social and Health Services)

READ FIRST TIME 02/04/04.

1 AN ACT Relating to the Washington telephone assistance program;
2 amending RCW 80.36.410; creating a new section; and providing an
3 expiration date.

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

5 **Sec. 1.** RCW 80.36.410 and 2003 c 134 s 2 are each amended to read
6 as follows:

7 ~~((1))~~ The legislature finds that universal telephone service is
8 an important policy goal of the state. The legislature further finds
9 that: ~~((a) Recent changes in the telecommunications industry, such as
10 federal access charges, raise concerns about the ability of low income
11 persons to continue to afford access to local exchange telephone
12 service; and (b) many low income persons making the transition to
13 independence from receiving supportive services through community
14 agencies do not qualify for economic assistance from the department.~~

15 ~~(2) Therefore, the legislature finds that: (a))~~ (1) It is in the
16 public interest to ((take steps to mitigate the effects of these
17 changes on)) ensure that affordable basic telephone service is
18 available to low-income persons; and ~~((b))~~ (2) advances in
19 telecommunications technologies, such as community service voice mail,

1 provide new and economically efficient ways to secure many of the
2 benefits of universal service to low-income persons who are not
3 customers of local exchange telephone service.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** (1) The legislature finds that recent
5 changes in the telecommunications industry, including increased
6 competition among companies and services, the increased migration of
7 telephone customers to wireless services, and the development of new
8 technologies such as voice-over-internet, have raised concerns about
9 the long-term funding of the Washington telephone assistance program
10 and its continued ability to provide assistance to low-income persons
11 who may not be able to afford needed telephone services.

12 (2) The department of social and health services shall convene a
13 working group consisting of representatives of telecommunications
14 providers, the office of financial management, the utilities and
15 transportation commission, the office of public counsel, designees of
16 the chair of the senate technology and communications committee and the
17 house technology, telecommunications and energy committee, and
18 community action agencies to review the current Washington telephone
19 assistance program structure and the viability of its long-term
20 funding. The department shall prepare a report setting forth the
21 working group's findings and recommendations regarding the structure of
22 the program, client eligibility, services to be covered, and program
23 funding and administration.

24 (3) The department shall report its findings and recommendations to
25 the legislature by December 1, 2004.

26 (4) This section expires July 1, 2005.

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