

2007 -- H 6244

LC02766

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2007

A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS - PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Introduced By: Representative Kenneth Carter

Date Introduced: April 04, 2007

Referred To: House Corporations

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 39-1-42 of the General Laws in Chapter 39-1 entitled "Public
2 Utilities Commission" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **39-1-42. Access to telephone information services for persons with disabilities. --** (a)

4 The public utilities commission shall establish, administer and promote an information
5 accessibility service that includes:

6 (1) A statewide telephone relay service and, through the competitive bidding process,
7 contract for the administration and operation of such a relay system for utilization of the
8 telecommunications network by deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired persons;

9 (2) The adaptive telephone equipment loan program capable of servicing the needs of
10 persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, severely speech impaired, or those with neuromuscular
11 impairments for use with a single party telephone line, to any subscriber who is certified as deaf,
12 hard of hearing, severely speech impaired, or with neuromuscular impairments by a licensed
13 physician, audiologist, speech pathologist, or a qualified state agency, pursuant to chapter 23 of
14 this title; and

15 (3) A telephone access to the text of newspaper programs to residents who are blind,
16 deaf or blind, visually impaired, or reading impaired with a single party telephone line.

17 (b) The commission shall establish, by rule or regulation, an appropriate funding
18 mechanism to recover the costs of providing this service from each wireless telecommunications
19 customer, and each residence and business telephone access line or trunk in the state, including

1 PBX trunks and centrex equivalent trunks and each service line or trunk, and upon each user
2 interface number or extension number or similarly identifiable line, trunk, or path to or from a
3 digital network. Notwithstanding the foregoing, there shall not be any additional funding
4 mechanism used to charge each wireless telecommunications customer, and each residence and
5 business telephone access line or trunk in the state, including PBX trunks and centrex equivalent
6 trunks and each service line or trunk, or upon each user interface number or extension number or
7 similarly identifiable line, trunk or path to or from a digital network, to recover the costs of
8 providing the services outlined in subsections (a)(1), (2) or (3) above.

9 Wireless telecommunications service providers shall bill their subscribers the surcharge
10 amount established by the commission and such surcharge shall be payable to the
11 telecommunications service providers by the subscriber of the wireless telecommunications
12 services.

13 (c) The commission, with the assistance of the state commission on the deaf and hard of
14 hearing, shall also develop the appropriate rules, regulations and service standards necessary to
15 implement the provisions of subsection (a)(1) of this section. At a minimum, however, the
16 commission shall require, under the terms of the contract, that the relay service provider:

17 (1) Offer its relay services seven (7) days a week, twenty-four (24) hours a day,
18 including holidays;

19 (2) Hire only qualified salaried operators with deaf language skills; and

20 (3) Maintain the confidentiality of all communications.

21 (d) [Deleted by P.L. 2004, ch. 504, section 3.]

22 (e) The commission shall collect from the telecommunications service providers
23 including the wireless telecommunications service providers, the amounts of the surcharge
24 collected from their subscribers and remit to the department of human services an additional ten
25 thousand dollars (\$10,000) annually commencing in fiscal year 2005 for the adaptive telephone
26 equipment loan program and forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to the department of human
27 services for the establishment of a new telephone access to the text of newspaper programs. The
28 surcharge referenced hereunder shall be generated from existing funding mechanisms and shall
29 not be generated as a result of any new funding mechanisms charged to each residence and
30 business telephone access line or trunk in the state, including PBX trunks and centrex equivalent
31 trunks and each service line or trunk, or upon each user interface number or extension number or
32 similarly identifiable line, trunk or path to or from a digital network.

1 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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- 1 This act would extend the source of funding for the services provided under this section
- 2 to wireless telecommunications providers.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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