

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2005 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 792
Economic Matters

(Delegate Benson, *et al.*)

Task Force to Study the Billing Practices of Public Service Companies -
Established

This bill creates a task force to study: (1) the billing practices of gas, electric, cable television, telephone, and wireless telephone companies, including how rates are calculated and presented on bills; (2) the regulatory authority of the federal, State, and local governments over billing practices; and (3) changes that State and local governments should pursue to make bills easier for citizens to understand.

The task force must issue a final report to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2005. The Office of People's Counsel (OPC) must provide staffing for the task force.

The bill takes effect June 1, 2005 and terminates December 31, 2005.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for OPC are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The Public Service Commission (PSC) is responsible for establishing just and reasonable rates for public service companies under its jurisdiction. PSC has

established minimal regulatory requirements regarding the content of billings provided by public service companies to their customers. Telecommunication bills are required to be rendered monthly and contain a clear listing of all charges and credits supported by certain information. Electric company bills are required to show meter reading information and the date, applicable rates, State and local surcharges, late payment charges, and total amount due.

Cable television and wireless telephone services are not regulated by PSC. Cable television is regulated by local governments through oversight of franchises and by the federal government. Wireless telephone services are regulated solely by the federal government.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Public Service Commission, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 24, 2005
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