
By: Delegate Owings

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 1996

Assigned to: Environmental Matters

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: March 8, 1996

CHAPTER ____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 Public Service Commission - Telephone Companies - Directory Assistance Calls

3 FOR the purpose of reducing the number of calls to directory assistance made by
4 residential customers upon which the Public Service Commission is prohibited from
5 levying charges; authorizing the Public Service Commission to allow telephone
6 companies to levy charges for certain directory assistance calls; setting certain
7 standards relating to those charges; repealing certain rate adjustments for
8 telephone companies; and generally relating to charges levied by telephone
9 companies.

10 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
11 Article 78 - Public Service Commission Law
12 Section 68
13 Annotated Code of Maryland
14 (1995 Replacement Volume)

15 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
16 MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

17 **Article 78 - Public Service Commission Law**

18 68.

19 (a) The Commission shall have the power to determine just and reasonable rates
20 of public service companies, whether as maximum, minimum or maximum and minimum,
21 respectively. The rates so determined shall be fixed by order to be served upon each
22 public service company affected thereby. This subsection does not apply to small rural
23 electric cooperatives.

1 (b) (1) The Commission may ~~not~~ authorize telephone company charges to be
2 levied for directory assistance calls ~~made by residential customers upon the first 6 2 calls~~
3 ~~made to directory assistance from each residential service per monthly billing cycle~~. THE
4 COMMISSION MAY AUTHORIZE CHARGES ON OTHER DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE
5 CALLS IF THE COMMISSION FINDS, AFTER NOTICE AND EVIDENTIARY HEARING,
6 THAT SUCH CHARGES PROTECT CONSUMERS BY PROVIDING AFFORDABLE AND
7 REASONABLY PRICED DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE SERVICE, ENCOURAGE THE
8 DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETITION, AND ARE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

9 (2) [In order to determine just and reasonable rates for residential
10 telephone service, the Commission shall adjust the residential telephone rates of a
11 telephone company that it considers appropriate to provide the same net operating
12 income that the telephone company would realize if no charges were levied on the first 12
13 calls made to directory assistance under paragraph (1) of this subsection.

14 (3) The Commission may not authorize telephone company charges to be
15 levied for directory assistance upon any person who suffers from a physical or visual
16 handicap that precludes the use of a telephone directory.

17 [(4)] (3) The Commission may provide other exemptions FROM
18 TELEPHONE COMPANY CHARGES TO BE LEVIED FOR DIRECTORY ASSISTANCE that
19 are just and reasonable.

20 (c) (1) The Commission may not authorize any mandatory telephone company
21 charges based on a measured time period unit rate for local messages.

22 (2) Paragraph (1) of this subsection does not preclude the Commission from
23 any study or evaluation of mandatory telephone company charges.

24 (3) If the Commission authorizes any telephone company to offer to
25 residential customers the option of telephone charges based on a measured time period
26 unit rate for local messages, the Commission shall also require the telephone company to
27 offer to residential customers:

28 (i) The option of an unlimited number and duration of local calls; and

29 (ii) The option of a specific charge per local call, regardless of the
30 duration of the local call.

31 (4) Until December 1, 1985 a telephone company may not require the
32 payment of an order processing charge or line change charge for a residential customer's
33 first change to any type of local telephone service based on charges per call or measured
34 time period unit rates.

35 (5) A telephone company may not require the payment of an order
36 processing charge or line change charge for a residential customer's first change from
37 local telephone service based on charges for measured time period unit rates, if the
38 change occurs within 18 months of the date that the consumer elects this telephone
39 service.

40 (6) The Public Service Commission may not authorize any telephone
41 company to charge for the distance of a call within any local calling area.

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1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
2 October 1, 1996.