

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 1428

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES, MARCH 23, 1993

**Brief Description:** Removing the expiration date and correcting references for the Washington telephone assistance program.

**SPONSORS:** House Committee on Energy & Utilities (originally sponsored by Representatives Grant, Casada, Finkbeiner, Long, King and Jacobsen)

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES**

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Sutherland, Chairman; Jesernig, Vice Chairman; Amondson, Hochstatter, McCaslin, Owen, Vognild, West, and Williams.

**Staff:** Erika Lim (786-7488)

**Hearing Dates:** March 23, 1993

**BACKGROUND:**

The Washington telephone assistance program (WTAP), formerly called lifeline service, is a program initiated in 1987 by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) to help low-income people afford basic local exchange telephone service. Qualified participants may receive a discount on connection fees, a waiver of deposit, a discount on the least expensive monthly service rate, or a combination of these three benefits. WTAP is funded by an excise tax, capped at \$.14 per month, on all switched access lines.

In 1992, approximately 83,500 households participated in WTAP.

Unless extended, WTAP expires on June 30, 1993.

**SUMMARY:**

WTAP is extended indefinitely.

"Department" is defined to mean the Department of Social and Health Services.

An outdated reference to the "lifeline service" is corrected to read the "Washington telephone assistance program."

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENT:**

The Washington Telephone Assistance Program is extended to June 30, 1998.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** none requested

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

This program has had increasing numbers of participants since its inception. It has allowed many low-income Washingtonians to have a phone in their homes.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** Cecile Anderson, Department of Social and Health Services (pro); Tom Walker, U.S. West (pro)