

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5431

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Energy & Utilities, February 18, 1997

Title: An act relating to mandatory measured telecommunications service.

Brief Description: Extending the prohibition on filing for a tariff on mandatory measured telecommunications service.

Sponsors: Senators Finkbeiner, Brown, Rossi, Strannigan and Long.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy & Utilities: 2/3/97, 2/18/97 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5431 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Finkbeiner, Chair; Hochstatter, Vice Chair; Brown, Jacobsen, Rossi, Strannigan and Swanson.

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

Background: In Washington, most consumers of telecommunications services subscribe to flat rate– local service, paying a set fee for unlimited usage of the local network. Most consumers also have the option of local measured– service, when usage is charged by a time increment similar to toll or long distance service.

The 1985 Legislature placed a temporary ban on the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission’s ability to approve a mandatory local measured service tariff filing. This ban was extended by the Legislature in 1987 and again in 1989. In 1993, the Legislature extended the ban until June 1, 1998.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The ban on the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission’s ability to approve a mandatory local measured service tariff filing is extended to July 1, 2002, and is expanded to include a ban on the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission’s ability to approve a price list that imposes mandatory local measured service.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill extended the ban permanently. The substitute extends the ban to price lists.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This legislation continues a policy that has been in place over a decade. Mandatory local measured service is an unpopular concept that will not improve any network congestion problems.

Testimony Against: With rapid changes occurring in the telecommunications industry, a permanent ban should be avoided. Recent network congestion problems may require some additional measured service options.

Testified: Mark Greenberg, Art Butler, Tracer (pro); Rosemary Williamson, GTE, COTE (con); Gary Gardner, Assn. of Internet Service Providers (pro); Rachael Myers, WA Citizen Action (pro); Tom Walker, US West (concerns); Gary Smith, Ind. Bus. Assn. (pro); Carolyn Logue, NFIB (pro).