
SENATE BILL 6679

State of Washington

56th Legislature

2000 Regular Session

By Senator Kohl-Welles

Read first time 01/21/2000. Referred to Committee on Energy,
Technology & Telecommunications.

1 AN ACT Relating to service standards for cable television
2 subscribers; adding a new chapter to Title 19 RCW; and providing an
3 effective date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature recognizes that local
6 governments are empowered to grant franchises to cable operators and
7 that changes in federal law governing cable services have increased the
8 importance of state action to ensure that consumer interests are
9 protected in the development and approval of franchise agreements
10 between local governments and cable operators. It is the intent of
11 this chapter to require certain provisions applicable to subscribers'
12 billing, quotes for cable services, and responsiveness to cable
13 subscribers' complaints.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** Unless the context clearly requires
15 otherwise, the definitions in this section apply throughout this
16 chapter.

17 (1) "Cable operator" means any person or group of persons who
18 provides cable service over a cable system and directly or through one

1 or more affiliates owns a significant interest in such cable system, or
2 who otherwise controls or is responsible for, through any arrangement,
3 the management and operation of such a cable system.

4 (2) "Cable service" means programming, in any combination, or any
5 other service provided by a cable operator on or in connection with a
6 cable system.

7 (3) "Cable system" means all or part of the facilities owned,
8 rented, leased, or otherwise controlled by a cable operator. This
9 includes plant, facilities, equipment, and closed signal transmission
10 paths; switches, software, hardware, and other processing equipment;
11 antennas, cables, amplifiers, towers, microwave links, studios, and
12 real and personal property; and any and all conductors, home terminals,
13 converters, remote control units, and all associated equipment or
14 facilities, the purposes of which include distributing cable service or
15 programming or producing, receiving, amplifying, storing, processing,
16 or distributing video signals.

17 (4) "Programming" means video material or programs prepared for or
18 capable of transmission on a cable system.

19 (5) "Subscriber" means any person who is lawfully receiving, for
20 any purpose or reason, any cable service whether or not a fee is paid.

21 (6) "Local government" means any county, city, or town that has
22 entered into a franchise agreement with a cable operator.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** Cable subscribers have the following rights
24 in their dealings with a cable operator:

25 (1) The right to a clear and concise monthly billing for cable
26 services, including all applicable charges, fees, and taxes;

27 (2) When requesting information about programming packages or
28 options offered by the cable operator, the right to a quoted price for
29 services and necessary equipment that includes all applicable charges,
30 fees, and taxes; and

31 (3) Following an inquiry or complaint to a cable operator about a
32 billing or quoted price for a service, the right to a prompt response
33 from the operator.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A cable operator shall provide subscribers
35 with a clear and concise monthly billing that reflects all applicable
36 charges, fees, and taxes for the service provided. When information
37 about programming packages or options offered by the cable operator is

1 requested, the operator shall provide a price for services and
2 necessary equipment that includes all applicable charges, fees, and
3 taxes.

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A cable operator representative shall
5 provide a prompt response to a subscriber inquiry or complaint about a
6 billing or quoted price for a service as provided in this chapter. The
7 operator shall respond to an inquiry or complaint made by telephone
8 within forty-eight hours, and to a written inquiry or complaint within
9 two weeks after receiving it.

10 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** The legislature finds that the practices
11 covered by this chapter are matters vitally affecting the public
12 interest for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act,
13 chapter 19.86 RCW. A violation of this chapter is not reasonable in
14 relation to the development and preservation of business and is an
15 unfair or deceptive act in trade or commerce and an unfair method of
16 competition for the purpose of applying the consumer protection act,
17 chapter 19.86 RCW.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** A franchise agreement between a local
19 government and a cable operator must require that a written summary of
20 the rights in sections 3 through 6 of this act must be provided to each
21 subscriber at the time of initial agreement with the cable operator and
22 to all subscribers at least once per year.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** Franchise agreements entered into between a
24 local government and a cable operator after the effective date of this
25 act must include provisions consistent with this chapter. Nothing in
26 this chapter preempts provisions in any other franchise agreement.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** This act takes effect January 1, 2001.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 10.** Sections 1 through 9 of this act constitute
29 a new chapter in Title 19 RCW.

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