

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6473

As Reported by House Committee On:
Technology, Energy & Communications

Title: An act relating to eliminating the requirement that telecommunications companies file price lists.

Brief Description: Eliminating the requirement that telecommunications companies file price lists.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Water, Energy & Environment (originally sponsored by Senators Poulsen, Morton and Rockefeller).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Technology, Energy & Communications: 2/21/06 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Eliminates requirement that telecommunication companies file price lists.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY, ENERGY & COMMUNICATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Morris, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair; Crouse, Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ericks, Hankins, Hudgins, Nixon, P. Sullivan, Sump and Takko.

Staff: Scott Richards (786-7156).

Background:

Classifications of Telephone Companies and Services

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) may classify any company or service as "competitive," which means the company or service is subject to effective competition. Minimal regulations apply to competitive companies and services, particularly in the area of pricing.

Tariffs and Price Lists

A service not classified as "competitive" must be described in a tariff, which is a detailed document, filed with the Commission, describing the rates, terms, and conditions of service. All tariffs are subject to review by the Commission when filed, and they may be suspended before they take effect.

A service classified as "competitive" is described in a "price list." While price lists look like tariffs and are also filed with the Commission, they are not reviewed or approved by the Commission. They automatically take effect 10 days after notice to the Commission and customers.

Summary of Bill:

Eliminating Price Lists

The Commission's authority to require price lists of competitive companies or services will end after June 30, 2007. Companies may no longer file and maintain price lists after that date; however, a company may extend this deadline by one year subject to Commission approval.

Authority to Waive Regulatory Requirements

For companies offering competitive services, the Commission may waive different regulatory requirements for different companies if it is in the public interest.

Transition Period

A company withdrawing a price list must inform its customers about the rates, terms, and conditions of any continuing services. Unchanged rates, terms, and conditions will have the same binding effect as the previous price list. If there are changes, however, the company must provide customers with a reasonable opportunity to accept or reject any new rate, term, or condition. If a customer does not cancel service within 30 days of being notified of the changes, the customer will be deemed to have accepted the new rates, terms, and conditions.

Additional Changes

The following changes are made: (1) a reference to the court order that divested the Bell System is removed; (2) provisions concerning competitive companies and services are harmonized; and (3) competitive service provisions concerning accounts, financial reports, and investigations that currently exist in rule are codified.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill eliminates an unnecessary requirement that no longer serves a purpose. There are ways to get competitive pricing information without access to price lists.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Tom Walker, Qwest Communications; and Dave Danner, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.