

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SSB 6007

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Clarifying the exemption in the public records act for customer information held by public utilities.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Governmental Operations (originally sponsored by Senators Rivers, Hatfield, Braun, Tom and Benton).

**Senate Committee on Governmental Operations**  
**House Committee on Local Government**

**Background:** Public Records Act (PRA). The PRA, enacted in 1972 as part of Initiative 276, requires that all state and local government agencies make all public records available for public inspection and copying unless certain statutory exemptions apply. Under the PRA, a public record includes any writing containing information relating to the conduct of government or the performance of any governmental or proprietary function prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency, regardless of physical form or characteristics. The provisions requiring public records disclosure must be interpreted liberally while the exemptions are interpreted narrowly to effectuate the general policy favoring disclosure. Over 500 specific references in the PRA or other statutes remove certain information from application of the PRA, provide exceptions to the public disclosure and copying of certain information, or designate certain information as confidential.

Public Utilities. Public utilities supply a utility service, such as broadband telecommunications, sewer, water, energy, or solid waste or refuse, to the public. The voters in an area of the state may vote to create a Public Utility District (PUD) to provide utility services. PUDs are governed by a board of either three or five nonpartisan commissioners who are elected to six-year terms. Currently there are 28 PUDs in Washington: 23 provide electricity, 19 provide water or wastewater services, and 13 provide local access to broadband telecommunications services.

Certain information relating to public utilities is exempt from disclosure under the PRA, including customers' residential addresses and residential telephone numbers contained in the records or lists held by the public utility of which they are customers. However, residential addresses and residential telephone numbers may be released to the Division of Child Support or the agency or firm providing child support enforcement for another state.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Summary:** The following information contained in the records or lists held by a public utility – either a PUD or a municipally owned utility – is exempt from public disclosure:

- customer addresses;
- customer telephone numbers;
- customer electronic contact information; and
- customer-specific utility usage and billing information in increments less than a billing cycle.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	48	0
House	98	0

**Effective:** June 12, 2014.