Amend **CSSB 408** by adding the following appropriately numbered SECTIONS to the bill and renumbering subsequent SECTIONS as appropriate:

SECTION ____. Section 56.021, Utilities Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 56.021. UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND ESTABLISHED. The commission shall adopt and enforce rules requiring local exchange companies to establish a universal service fund to:

(1) assist telecommunications providers in providing basic local telecommunications service at reasonable rates in high cost rural areas;

(2) reimburse the telecommunications carrier that provides the statewide telecommunications relay access service under Subchapter D;

(3) finance the specialized telecommunications assistance program established under Subchapter E;

(4) reimburse the department, the Texas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and the commission for costs incurred in implementing this chapter and Chapter 57;

(5) reimburse a telecommunications carrier providing lifeline service as provided by 47 C.F.R. Part 54, Subpart E, as amended;

(6) finance the implementation and administration of an integrated eligibility process created under Section 17.007 for customer service discounts relating to telecommunications services, including outreach expenses the commission determines are reasonable and necessary;

(7) reimburse a designated provider under Subchapter F; [and]

(8) reimburse a successor utility under Subchapter G; and

(9) finance the program established under Subchapter H.

SECTION ____. Chapter 56, Utilities Code, is amended by adding Subchapter H to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER H. AUDIO NEWSPAPER PROGRAM

Sec. 56.301. AUDIO NEWSPAPER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. The

commission by rule shall establish a program to provide from the universal service fund financial assistance for a free telephone service for blind and visually impaired persons that offers the text of newspapers using synthetic speech. The commission may adopt rules to implement the program.