

By: Rodriguez

H.B. No. 453

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to grants for community-based telephone voice-mail services for individuals in crisis or in transition.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. 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

1 an integrated eligibility process created under Section 17.007 for
2 customer service discounts relating to telecommunications
3 services, including outreach expenses the commission determines
4 are reasonable and necessary;

5 (7) reimburse a designated provider under Subchapter
6 F;

7 (8) reimburse a successor utility under Subchapter G;
8 ~~[and]~~

9 (9) finance the program established under Subchapter
10 H; and

11 (10) fund grants under the program established under
12 Subchapter I.

13 SECTION 2. Chapter 56, Utilities Code, is amended by adding
14 Subchapter I to read as follows:

15 SUBCHAPTER I. TELEPHONE VOICE-MAIL GRANT PROGRAM

16 Sec. 56.351. TELEPHONE VOICE-MAIL GRANTS. (a) The
17 commission by rule shall establish a commission program to fund
18 from the universal service fund grants to assist community-based
19 providers of telephone voice-mail boxes for individuals in crisis
20 or in transition who cannot afford telephone services.

21 (b) Rules adopted under this section shall provide for a
22 preference for a grant applicant that does not charge a client for a
23 telephone voice-mail box or that charges only a nominal amount for
24 enrollment in and oversight of voice-mail box services.

25 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2007.