

By: Rodriguez

H.B. No. 232

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1
2 relating to grants for community-based telephone voice-mail
3 services for individuals in crisis or in transition.

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

5 SECTION 1. Section 56.021, Utilities Code, is amended to
6 read as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 (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-BOX ASSISTANCE GRANTS.

17 (a) The commission by rule shall establish and implement a
18 commission program to provide from the universal service fund
19 funding for a grant program to assist the service administrators of
20 telephone voice-mail-box services for individuals who are
21 homeless, are in transition, or cannot afford telephone services.
22 The grant program may not fully fund a voice-mail-box service
23 program. To be eligible for a grant under the program, the service
24 administrator must be:

25 (1) a publicly funded nonprofit organization; or

26 (2) an organization exempt from federal income tax
27 under Section 501(a), Internal Revenue Code of 1986, by being

1 listed as exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of that code.

2 (b) Rules adopted under this section must:

3 (1) include accountability measures and provisions
4 for loss of eligibility for failure to comply with the measures; and

5 (2) require grant recipients to provide the commission
6 with information on program outcomes.

7 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2009.