

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIRST REGULAR SESSION

ONE HUNDRED AND TENTH LEGISLATURE

Legislative Document

No. 492

S. P. 191

In Senate, January 29, 1981

Referred to the Committee on Public Utilities. Sent up for concurrence and ordered printed.

MAY M. ROSS, Secretary of the Senate

Presented by Senator Hichens of York.

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-ONE

AN ACT Relating to Compensatory Telecommunication Toll Call Rates for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Persons.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine, as follows:

35 MRSA § 2361, sub-§ 1, as enacted by PL 1979, c. 625, is repealed and the following enacted in its place:

1. **Toll call rates. The commission shall establish an 80% rate reduction for toll calls to and from deaf and hearing impaired persons who must rely on teletypewriters for telephone communications.**

STATEMENT OF FACT

Deaf and severely hearing impaired persons cannot use the telephone system in the same way hearing people can. They must use cumbersome teletypewriters to transmit typed or visual messages across telephone lines.

Since a teletypewriter message must be manually typed out on one machine and visually read on the receiving machine, teletypewriter conversations are long and protracted.

Demonstrations at the University of Southern Maine indicated that on the average it takes an individual 7 times longer to communicate a given message over a teletypewriter machine than to communicate that same message orally.

Even the more skilled typists were unable to conduct their conversations in less than 5 times the time of hearing persons.

Accordingly, it costs deaf persons 5 to 7 times as much to communicate a simple message as it costs a hearing person. This extraordinary cost effectively serves to isolate deaf persons from society's mainstream.

To combat this problem many states, including Connecticut and Vermont provide reduced toll call rates to teletypewriter users.

This bill ensures that in Maine intrastate toll rates for teletypewriter conversations shall be reduced by 80% to reflect the fact that teletypewriter conversations take at least 5 times longer than oral conversations.