

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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1 FIRST REGULAR SESSION
2

3 ONE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH LEGISLATURE
4

5 Legislative Document

No. 1271

6
7 S.P. 468

In Senate, April 9, 1985

8 Reference to the Committee on Utilities suggested and ordered printed.

9 JOY J. O'BRIEN, Secretary of the Senate

10 Presented by Senator Gill of Cumberland.

Cosponsored by Representative Clark of Millinocket, Representative Brodeur of Auburn and Senator Baldacci of Penobscot.

11
12 STATE OF MAINE
13

14 IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
15 NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-FIVE
16

17 AN ACT to Ensure Reduced Telephone Rates for
18 Volunteers and Nonprofit Organizations
19 Serving the Deaf, Hearing Impaired and
20 Speech Impaired.
21

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

24 Sec. 1. 35 MRSA §2361, as amended by PL 1983, c.
25 531, §§1 and 2, is repealed.

26 Sec. 2. 35 MRSA c. 174 is enacted to read:

27 CHAPTER 174

28 TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE

29 §2371. Telecommunication services for the deaf,
30 hearing impaired and speech impaired

31 1. Toll call rates. The commission shall estab-
32 lish, within 30 days after the effective date of this

1 Act, a 70% rate reduction for intrastate toll calls
2 from deaf and hearing impaired and speech impaired
3 persons who must rely on teletypewriters for residen-
4 tial telephone communications. To qualify for the re-
5 duction, a customer must file an affidavit, on a form
6 approved by the Public Utilities Commission, with the
7 telephone company, stating that, due to deafness or
8 hearing impairment or speech impairment, he or a mem-
9 ber of the household must rely on a teletypewriter
10 for telephone communications, and that such equipment
11 is connected or acoustically coupled to his tele-
12 phone.

13 2. Moneys for telecommunication typewriters. The
14 Bureau of Rehabilitation within the Department of Hu-
15 man Services, pursuant to any appropriation of money
16 to the bureau for telecommunication typewriters for
17 the deaf, hearing impaired and speech impaired,
18 shall, upon request, provide up to 50% of the cost of
19 telecommunication typewriters to any organization or
20 municipality that makes available the remaining funds
21 for this equipment in a manner satisfactory to the
22 Director of the Bureau of Rehabilitation.

23 3. Telecommunications Equipment Fund. A Tele-
24 communications Equipment Fund is established. The
25 Office of Deafness in the Bureau of Rehabilitation
26 may accept any gifts or grants for the purposes of
27 this section. These, and any authorized appropri-
28 ations shall be deposited in the fund, and disbursed
29 in accordance with this section. The fund may be
30 used for purchase, lease, upgrading, installation,
31 maintenance and repair of special telecommunications
32 equipment for the deaf, hearing impaired or speech
33 impaired. The Office of Deafness under the Bureau of
34 Rehabilitation may draw on the fund in accordance
35 with the Telecommunications Equipment Plan required
36 under subsection 4. The commission shall include a
37 progress report on this program in its annual report
38 under section 17, subsection 2.

39 4. Telecommunications equipment plan. The Of-
40 fice of Deafness shall develop a plan to make spe-
41 cial telecommunications equipment available to deaf,
42 hearing impaired and speech impaired persons and to
43 distribute money from the Telecommunications Equip-
44 ment Fund. The plan shall be developed by the Office

1 of Deafness and approved by the commission annually,
2 not later than January 1st, after appropriate notice
3 and hearing. The plan shall provide for the expendi-
4 ture of money from the fund for the benefit of deaf,
5 hearing impaired and speech impaired persons for the
6 purchase, lease, upgrading, installation, maintenance
7 and repair of special telecommunications equipment
8 capable of serving their needs. Persons who are
9 profoundly deaf or speech impaired so that they can-
10 not use the telephone for expressive or receptive
11 communications, as verified by a written report from
12 an otologist, audiologist or physician are eligible
13 for the assistance from the fund. The plan shall in-
14 clude specific criteria that will govern the priori-
15 ties assigned to various persons who need this equip-
16 ment. The criteria shall take into account household
17 income, degree of impairment, need for emergency com-
18 munications, living arrangements and other factors
19 deemed relevant by the Office of Deafness.

20 5. Usage-sensitive local rates. In any area
21 where the commission has approved a usage-sensitive
22 rate structure for local telephone calls, a 70% re-
23 duction shall be applied to the usage-sensitive por-
24 tion of the local telephone rate for deaf and hearing
25 impaired and speech impaired customers who are eligi-
26 ble for the rate reduction for intrastate toll calls
27 in accordance with subsection 1.

28 6. Service organizations. Volunteers, nonprofit
29 and government organizations serving the deaf, hear-
30 ing impaired and speech impaired persons shall be el-
31 igible for a 70% rate reduction on interstate toll
32 rates and a 70% rate reduction on the usage-sensitive
33 portion of any usage-sensitive local telephone rates.
34 To qualify for the reduction, the organization must
35 file an affidavit with the telephone company on a
36 form approved by the Public Utilities Commission,
37 stating that a majority of the telephone calls made
38 from their telephone are to or on behalf of deaf,
39 hearing impaired and speech impaired persons who must
40 rely on a teletypewriter for telephone communica-
41 tions.

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STATEMENT OF FACT

2 Organizations such as Ingraham Volunteers, Pine
3 Tree Society, Governor Baxter School for the Deaf,
4 the Office of Deafness in the Bureau of Rehabilita-
5 tion and the Coordinator of Deaf Services in the Bu-
6 reau of Mental Health provide the communications link
7 to essential services for deaf, hearing impaired and
8 speech impaired persons. The bill makes them eligi-
9 ble for 70% telephone discount just like their cli-
10 ents.

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