

ACCESSIBLE ELECTRONIC INFORMATION ACT

Mitchell Bean, Director
Phone: (517) 373-8080
<http://www.house.mi.gov/hfa>

House Bill 5392

Sponsor: Rep. Chris Kolb

Committee: Energy and Technology

Complete to 11-29-05

A SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 5392 AS INTRODUCED 11-1-05

House Bill 5392 would create a new act to be known as the Accessible Electronic Information Act. Under the bill, "accessible electronic information" is defined to mean news and other timely information, including newspapers, delivered through high-speed computers and telecommunication technology in a form appropriate for use by blind or disabled individuals."

The program. Under the bill, an Accessible Electronic Information Service Program would be created in the Department of Labor and Economic Growth, Commission for the Blind. The program would be required to do all of the following: a) provide intrastate service to blind and disabled people that allows them to receive accessible electronic information by means of a touch-tone telephone, computer, or other electronic means; b) provide for Internet registration for blind and disabled individuals who chose to participate in the program; and c) make maximum use of state, federal, and other sources of funds that are available to promote accessible electronic information, including seeking grants and in-kind support, and by securing low-cost interstate telecommunications rates or reimbursements.

Administration of the program. The bill specifies that the department would oversee the program, and that the program could be administered under a contract with a non-profit entity. Any contract for program administration would have to be let through the state competitive bidding process and provide a preference for an entity that had previously provided such services to blind and disabled people in Michigan, or that had the existing technological infrastructure to do so.

Annual report. The entity administering the program would be required to submit an annual report by October 1 to the legislative subcommittee that had jurisdiction over appropriations to the Department of Labor and Economic Growth. The annual report would have to include the following: a) a description of the accessible electronic information services provided; b) an accounting of any money received or expended; c) the number of blind and disabled people accessing each type of service; d) the frequency with which each type of service was accessed; and e) recommendations for improvements in the program.

Surcharge. Under the bill, the Public Service Commission could impose a surcharge of up to \$0.01 per access line per month on customers of telecommunication providers of

basic local exchange service (as defined in section 102 in the Michigan Telecommunications Act). Each year, after consultation with the entity that administered the program and the department, the Public Service Commission would be required to determine the amount of money reasonably needed to operate the program for the year. The commission would be required to establish the surcharge for the succeeding year in an amount expected to produce the revenue goal equal to the anticipated cost of the program.

Responsibilities of telecommunication providers and state treasurer. The bill requires that the telecommunication providers of basic local exchange service remit the money generated by the surcharge to the state treasurer for deposit into an account in the state treasury designated for receipt of the surcharge.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no significant fiscal impact on the State of Michigan. The fee imposed by this bill is designed to continue an existing program, and therefore the Department of Labor and Economic Growth should not incur any additional costs. State revenue should rise by approximately \$40,000.00 to \$50,000.00. Implementation of the maximum allowable fee of \$.01 per telecommunication access line per month would generate approximately \$768,000.00. However, the actual fee is expected to be set at a lower rate sufficient to generate up to \$50,000.00 annually. The Department supports this legislation.

Legislative Analyst: J. Hunault
Fiscal Analyst: Richard Child

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.