



House of Representatives

File No. 639

General Assembly

February Session, 2002

(Reprint of File No. 533)

Substitute House Bill No. 5672
As Amended by House
Amendment Schedule "A"

Approved by the Legislative Commissioner
May 4, 2002

**AN ACT CONCERNING TELEPHONE CALLS FROM A
CORRECTIONAL FACILITY.**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of
2 Correction shall establish a pilot program to allow an option, to be
3 made available to inmates of a unit under said commissioner's control,
4 for payment of telephone service by use of a debit account system or
5 other similar system, in lieu of collect calls, under which funds may be
6 deposited into an inmate's account in order to pay for station-to-station
7 telephone service for such inmate. Said commissioner shall post notice
8 of such option to the inmates and their families. The commissioner, in
9 consultation with the Chief Information Officer of the state, shall make
10 every effort to have a pilot program for a debit account system, or
11 similar system, in place within one year of the effective date of this
12 section.

This act shall take effect as follows:

Section 1	<i>from passage</i>
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The following fiscal impact statement and bill analysis are prepared for the benefit of members of the General Assembly, solely for the purpose of information, summarization, and explanation, and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either House thereof for any purpose:

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Fund-Type	Agency Affected	FY 03 \$
GF - See Below	Department of Correction; Department of Information Technology	See Below

Note: GF=General Fund

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill, as amended by House 'A', requires the Commissioner of Correction, in consultation with the Chief Information Officer of the State, to make every effort to establish a pilot program, within one year of the effective date of this act (which is upon passage), to allow an option for inmate payment of telephone service by use of a debit account system or similar. The commissioner is also required to post notice of such option to the inmates and their families of the debit account system.

Additional resources would continue to be necessary to cover costs related to operation and maintenance of the system, as well as software for such a pilot program. However, these costs are unknown at this time. While the amendment is unclear as to the source of any necessary funding for this pilot program, it is anticipated that costs will be borne by the service provider.

Finally, the bill as amended requires the pilot program to include an option for a debit accounting system whereby funds would be placed in an inmate's account for telephone use. This would allow inmates to avoid costs associated with collect calls. The Department of Corrections already receives funds from families for inmate accounts

so that inmates can purchase goods within the facilities, it is anticipated that the administration of such a debit account system could be handled within the department's current budgetary resources.

House 'A' struck the original language in the bill and removed the associated fiscal impact.

Background

A one-year extension on the inmate telephone services contract with the service provider was agreed to in December of 2001. The Department of Information Technology is in the process of finalizing reviews of bids for the statewide telecommunications services contract and expects to have a decision made by the end of June 2002. The statewide telecommunications contract includes provisions for the inmate telephone system.

The 20 correctional facilities operated by the department have an inmate population of 17,500. Telephone services are currently provided to DOC by MCI Telecommunications' Maximum Security Solution System, which includes call-control mechanisms, call-monitoring equipment, tracking tools, and a 50% commission on all calls carried by the system. The actual contract is between MCI and DOIT, which administers all of the telephone services for state agencies. Approximately 1,100 phones are installed and in use at the various facilities.

In order for an inmate to make a call on the current system, the inmate must enter a Personal Identification Number (PIN). This has proved to be significant since the telephone system has played a major role in stopping drugs from entering prisons, preventing escapes, locating escapees, identifying and tracking gang activity, and preserving the safety of staff and the public. According to the department, maintaining the ability to monitor phone calls and to

address the various security issues would be the main priority with any phone system contract.

OLR Amended Bill Analysis

sHB 5672 (as amended by House "A")*

AN ACT CONCERNING TELEPHONE CALLS FROM A CORRECTIONAL FACILITY**SUMMARY:**

This bill requires the corrections commissioner to establish a pilot program to give inmates at one corrections unit the option of paying for phone service using a debit or a similar system instead of calling collect, with inmates paying for calls using money deposited in their accounts for that purpose. The commissioner must (1) post a notice to advise inmates and families of the option and (2) in consultation with the state's chief information officer, make every effort to establish the pilot program within a year after the bill's effective date.

*House Amendment "A" eliminates provisions that barred the state from receiving any commission or other financial gain from prison inmates' phone use under any new state contract for inmates' telephone service and required the correction commissioner to (1) include the cost to inmates and their families as a criterion in his request for proposals for such contracts and (2) give preference to lower costs to inmates and their families in deciding which contract bid to accept.

The amendment requires the corrections commissioner, rather than the state chief information officer, to provide the debit option. It also requires him to (1) provide the option to inmates at one unit rather than one correction facility; (2) post notice of the option, rather than provide it, or have it provided, to inmates and families; and (3) make every effort to operate, rather than simply to provide, the pilot debit option within one year of the bill's effective date.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

BACKGROUND

Legislative History

The House referred the bill (File 533) to the Government Administration and Elections Committee on April 23, to the Judiciary Committee on the April 26, and to the Appropriations Committee on April 30. The committees reported the bill unchanged on April 25, April 29, and May 1, respectively.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 41 Nay 4

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Joint Favorable Report

Yea 11 Nay 5

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Report

Yea 19 Nay 4

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable Report

Yea 29 Nay 18