

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
76R7497 JJT-D

H.B. 2910
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Economic Development
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Engrossed

DIGEST

Relay access service is a service provided by the state that enables persons with an impairment of hearing or speech to access the telephone. This service is called Relay Texas. Currently, the Public Utility Commission of Texas (commission) contracts with one vendor to provide basic statewide telecommunications relay access service. The commission has been interested in providing various possible special features of Relay Texas that would allow for enhanced communication for Texans with a hearing or speech impairment. For example, Video Relay Interpreting is a special feature that would allow for better communication between deaf and hard-of-hearing Texans, as well as individuals with a speech impairment. However, the Utilities Code does not specifically address the purchasing of special features. Additionally, the code limits the commission from contracting with multiple vendors, and the preferred vendor for the basic service may not offer the desired special feature or may be unable to provide the special features at a reasonable cost. H.B. 2910 allows the commission to contract for a special feature for Relay Texas if the commission determines that the feature will provide certain benefits. This bill also allows the commission, in contracting for special features of Relay Texas, to contract with vendors other than the provider of the basic relay access service if the provider is unable to provide the special feature at the best value to the state.

PURPOSE

As proposed, H.B. 2910 authorizes contracts for special features of the telecommunications relay access service.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter D, Chapter 56, Utilities Code, by adding Section 56.1085, as follows:

Sec. 56.1085. SPECIAL FEATURES FOR RELAY ACCESS SERVICE. Authorizes the Public Utility Commission of Texas (commission) to contract for a special feature for the state's telecommunications relay access service if the commission determines the installation will have the enumerated benefits. Authorizes the commission, if the carrier selected to provide the telecommunications relay access service under Section 56.108 (Selection of Telecommunications Relay Access Service Carrier) is unable to provide the special feature at the best value to the state, to make a written award of a contract for a carrier to provide the special feature to the telecommunications carrier whose proposal is most advantageous to the state, considering the enumerated items. Requires the commission to consider each proposal in a manner that does not disclose the contents of the proposal to a telecommunications carrier making a competing proposal. Requires the commission's evaluation of a telecommunications carrier's proposal to include the considerations provided by Section 5.108(d).

SECTION 2. Amends Section 56.109(a), Utilities Code, to require the telecommunications carrier selected to provide the telecommunications relay access service under Section 56.108 or the carrier selected to provide a special feature for the telecommunications relay access service under Section 56.1085 to be compensated at rates and on terms provided by the carrier's contract with the commission.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 1999.

SECTION 4. Emergency clause.