

**STORAGE NAME:** h1537a.utco.doc  
**DATE:** February 20, 2002

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON  
UTILITIES & TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
ANALYSIS**

**BILL #:** HB 1537  
**RELATING TO:** Taxation of Communication Services  
**SPONSOR(S):** Representative Byrd  
**TIED BILL(S):** None

**ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COUNCIL(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:**

- (1) UTILITIES & TELECOMMUNICATIONS YEAS 9 NAYS 2
  - (2) FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY COUNCIL
  - (3)
  - (4)
  - (5)
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I. SUMMARY:

During the 2000 Regular Session, the Legislature enacted chapter 2000-260, Laws of Florida that established a unified communications taxation scheme for the state, effective October 1, 2001. Chapter 2000-260, Laws of Florida, is codified at chapter 202, Florida Statutes. It combined the seven different types of communications taxes and fees into a two-tiered tax composed of a state tax and a local option tax on communications services. During the 2001 Regular Session, the Legislature enacted chapter 2001-240, Laws of Florida that set the rates and made other changes to chapter 202, Florida Statutes. DBS service or direct-to-home satellite service had been subject to a 6% state sales tax, while cable service was subject to state sales tax of 6%, and local franchise fees of up to 5%. The new rates were 13.17% for DBS and 9.17% plus a local variable rate for cable service.

This bill would phase-in an exemption to the sales tax portion of 6.8% in the new communications services tax for residential direct-to-home satellite service and residential cable services over an 8-year period.

The fiscal impact is a reduction in state and local revenue of \$18.2 million for FY02-03 and \$39.2 million for FY03-04. The five-year projection revenue reduction is \$100 million.

II. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS:

A. DOES THE BILL SUPPORT THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES:

- |                                   |   |                             |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. <u>Less Government</u>         | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. <u>Lower Taxes</u>             | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 3. <u>Individual Freedom</u>      | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. <u>Personal Responsibility</u> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. <u>Family Empowerment</u>      | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>            | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

For any principle that received a "no" above, please explain:

B. PRESENT SITUATION:

During the 2000 Regular Session, the Legislature enacted chapter 2000-260, Laws of Florida (CS/CS/CS/SB 1338) that established a unified communications taxation scheme for the state, effective October 1, 2001. This act was codified at chapter 202, Florida Statutes and combined the seven different types of communications taxes and fees into a two-tiered tax composed of a state tax and a local option tax on communications services. It expanded the tax base and combined the sales tax on communications services, the local public services tax, and local franchise fees on telecommunications companies and cable companies, allocates the gross receipts tax on communications services, and provides a permit fee option for local governments. It provided for a revenue neutral taxing scheme to be administered by the Department of Revenue and provides that the revenues are to be distributed to the Public Education Capital Outlay Fund, the General Revenue Fund and to local governments.

The act directed the communications companies and local governments to supply information regarding the assessment of the various taxes to the Department of Revenue. This information would be used by the Revenue Estimating Conference for calculating revenue neutral rates for presentation to the 2001 Legislature.

Prior to October 1, 2001, the rates for the various communication services were as follows depending on the area of the state. This example is for the maximum rate for a city or charter county.

**Residential Telephone Service:**

2.56% Gross Receipts Tax  
7.00% or 10.00% Public Service Tax  
1.00% Franchise Fee  
Total maximum rate = 10.56% to 13.56%

**Business/Wireless Telephone Service:**

2.56% Gross Receipts Tax  
7.00% Sales Tax  
7.00% or 10.00% Public Service Tax  
1.00% Franchise Fee  
Total maximum rate = 17.56% to 20.56%

**Direct-to-Home Satellite Service:**

6.00% Sales Tax  
Total maximum rate = 6.00%

**Cable Service:**

6.00% Sales Tax  
5.00% Franchise Fee  
Total maximum rate = 11.00%

Residential telephone service was exempt from the state sales tax of 7.00%.

During the 2001 Regular Session, the Legislature enacted chapter 2001-140, Laws of Florida that set the rates on the new tax base and made other changes to chapter 202, Florida Statutes.

The state taxes, sales tax and gross receipts tax were combined into one state rate which consisted of a sales tax portion at 6.8% and a gross receipts portion at 2.37%. Because of the wide variation of tax rates at the local level, a variable rate was established in the act for each county and municipality in the state. The direct-to-home satellite service was taxed at a rate of 10.8%, which included the 6.8% sales tax portion and a 4% portion to be distributed to the local governments. It was also subject to the 2.37% gross receipts portion. The following example is for the maximum rate for a city or charter county.

**Residential Telephone Service:**

2.37% Gross Receipts portion  
0.00% Sales Tax portion (exempt)  
x.xx% Variable Local Tax portion  
Total rate = 2.37% state rate plus  
x.xx% variable local rate

**Business/Wireless Telephone Service:**

2.37% Gross Receipts portion  
6.80% Sales Tax portion  
x.xx% Variable Local Tax portion  
Total rate = 9.17% state rate plus  
x.xx% variable local rate

**Direct-to-Home Satellite Service:**

2.37% Gross Receipts portion  
10.8% Tax rate  
6.80% State Tax portion  
4.00% Flat Local Tax component  
Total rate = 13.17%

**Cable Service:**

2.37% Gross Receipts portion  
6.80% /State Tax portion  
x.xx% Variable Local Tax portion  
Total rate = 9.17% state rate plus  
x.xx% variable local rate

Residential telephone service is still exempt from the sales tax portion of the new communications services tax.

**C. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:**

This bill would phase-in an exemption to the sales tax portion of the new communications services tax for residential direct-to-home satellite service and residential cable services.

It phases out the state sales tax portion of the tax levied on residential direct-to-home satellite service pursuant to section 202.12(1)(c), Florida Statutes, over 8 years. After that time, residential direct-to-home satellite service will only be subject to the 4% local distribution portion and the 2.37% gross receipts portion of the communications services tax. It also phases out the state tax portion levied on residential cable services over the same period. After that time, residential cable service will only be subject to the variable local portion and the 2.37% gross receipts portion of the communications services tax.

It also phases out the state distribution under the direct-to-home satellite service portion of the communications services tax. It maintains the local option sales taxes for residential cable service.

**D. SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS:**

Please see Present Situation and Effect of Proposed Changes sections.

III. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. <u>Revenues:</u>	2002-03	2003-04
General Revenue Fund	(\$16.0 m)	(\$34.5 m)
Solid Waste Mgt. TF	(insignificant)	(\$00.1 m)
Total State	(\$16.0 m)	(\$34.6 m)

The Revenue Impact Conference estimated that the revenue reductions would be \$88.2 million over a 5-year period.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. <u>Revenues:</u>	2002-03	2003-04
Local Gov. Half Cent	(\$1.6 m)	(\$3.4 m)
County Revenue Sharing	(\$0.6 m)	(\$1.2 m)
Total Local	(\$2.2 m)	(\$4.6 m)

The Revenue Impact Conference estimated that the revenue reductions would be \$11.8 million over a 5-year period.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The Revenue Impact Conference estimated that the revenue reductions would be a total of \$100 million over a 5-year period.

The fiscal data is from the Revenue Impact Conference that met on February 8, 2002. The assumptions for the estimate are that the annual subscription growth rates for cable and DBS (satellite) service will remain constant over the forecast period and that the median monthly price for DBS services will also remain constant.

The State of Florida's share of cable and DBS services in the United States is roughly 5% based upon population shares. The residential shares sales in calendar year 1999 were 95% for cable service and 90% for DBS service.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds.

B. REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:

This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

C. REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:

This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

V. COMMENTS:

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

None.

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON UTILITIES & TELECOMMUNICATIONS:

Prepared by:

Staff Director:

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Patrick L. "Booter" Imhof

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