



317048

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate	.	House
Comm: RCS	.	
03/18/2025	.	
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The Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government (Rodriguez) recommended the following:

**Senate Amendment**

Delete lines 120 - 310

and insert:

Section 2. Present subsections (2), (3) and (4), (5) and (6), (7) and (8), (9), (10), (11), (12), and (13) through (17) of section 427.703, Florida Statutes, are redesignated as subsections (3), (5) and (6), (9) and (10), (12) and (13), (16), (19), (18), (20), and (22) through (26), respectively, new subsections (2), (4), (7), (8), (11), (14), (15), (17), and (21)



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11 are added to that section, and subsection (1) and present  
12 subsections (4), (6), (10), (11), (12), (14), and (16) of that  
13 section are amended, to read:

14 427.703 Definitions.—As used in this part:

15 (1) "Administrator" means a corporation not for profit  
16 incorporated pursuant to ~~the provisions of~~ chapter 617 and  
17 designated by the Florida Public Service Commission to  
18 administer the telecommunications access system ~~relay service~~  
19 ~~system and the distribution of specialized telecommunications~~  
20 ~~devices~~ pursuant to ~~the provisions of~~ this act and rules and  
21 regulations established by the commission.

22 (2) "Commercial mobile radio service" or "CMRS" means a  
23 mobile radio communications service, provided for profit, which  
24 is interconnected to the public switched network and is  
25 available to the public or to such classes of eligible users as  
26 to be effectively available to a substantial portion of the  
27 public. The term does not include services that do not provide  
28 access to 911 service, communication channels suitable only for  
29 data transmission, wireless roaming services or other nonlocal  
30 radio access line services, or private telecommunications  
31 systems.

32 (4) "Communications service" means a service provided to  
33 subscribers through wireline telecommunications equipment,  
34 interconnected VoIP, or CMRS.

35 (6) ~~(4)~~ "Deafblind" ~~"Dual sensory impaired"~~ means having  
36 both a permanent hearing impairment and a permanent visual  
37 impairment and includes dual sensory impairment ~~deaf/blindness.~~

38 (7) "Deaf service center" means a center that serves,  
39 within a defined region, individuals with hearing loss or speech



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40 impairment or who are deafblind by distributing equipment and  
41 providing services on behalf of the administrator.

42 (8) "Deaf service center director" means an individual who  
43 serves as the director for a deaf service center and is  
44 responsible for ensuring that individuals with hearing loss or  
45 speech impairment or who are deafblind are qualified to receive  
46 equipment or services in accordance with ss. 427.701-427.708,  
47 based on their impairment by attesting to such impairment as  
48 provided for in the procedures developed by the administrator.

49 (10)-(6) "Hearing loss impaired" or "having a hearing  
50 impairment" means deaf, late-deafened, or hard of hearing and,  
51 for purposes of this part, includes being dual sensory impaired.

52 (11) "Interconnected voice-over-Internet protocol" or  
53 "interconnected VoIP" means a service that does all of the  
54 following:

55 (a) Enables subscribers to have real-time, two-way voice  
56 communications.

57 (b) Requires a broadband connection.

58 (c) Requires customer equipment compatible with Internet  
59 protocol.

60 (d) Allows subscribers to receive calls from and place  
61 calls to a public switched telephone network. The term does not  
62 include services that do not provide access to 911 service or  
63 private telecommunications systems.

64 (14) "Regional distribution center" means an entity,  
65 including, but not limited to, a deaf service center or a  
66 provider of audiology services, which has contracted with the  
67 administrator to distribute equipment and provide services to  
68 qualified individuals with hearing loss or speech impairment or



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69 who are deafblind.

70 (15) "Regional distribution center director" means an  
71 individual qualified by the administrator who serves as the  
72 director for a regional distribution center and meets the  
73 standards for ensuring that individuals with hearing loss or  
74 speech impairment or who are deafblind are qualified to receive  
75 equipment or services in accordance ss. 427.701-427.708 on their  
76 impairment by attesting to such impairment as provided for in  
77 the procedures developed by the administrator.

78 (17) "Specialized communications technology" means mobile  
79 devices, tablet computers, software, or applications that can be  
80 used to provide communications services to a hearing impaired,  
81 speech impaired, or deafblind person.

82 (19)-(10) "Speech impaired" or "having a speech impairment"  
83 means having a permanent loss of verbal communication ability  
84 that which prohibits normal usage of a standard telephone  
85 handset.

86 (18)-(11) "Specialized telecommunications device" means a  
87 TDD, a volume control handset, a ring signaling device, or any  
88 other customer premises telecommunications equipment that can be  
89 specifically designed or used to provide basic access to  
90 communications telecommunications services for a person with  
91 hearing loss or speech impairment or who is deafblind hearing  
92 impaired, speech impaired, or dual sensory impaired person.

93 (20)-(12) "Surcharge" means an additional charge which is to  
94 be paid by local exchange telecommunications company subscribers  
95 pursuant to the cost recovery mechanism established under s.  
96 427.704(4) in order to implement the system described herein.

97 (21) "Telecommunications access system" means the system



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98 administered pursuant to this section, and includes the  
99 administration of the telecommunications relay service system  
100 and the distribution of specialized telecommunications devices  
101 and specialized communications technologies pursuant to ss.  
102 427.701-427.708 and rules and regulations established by the  
103 commission.

104 (23)-(14) "Telecommunications device for the deaf," ~~or~~  
105 "TDD," or "text device" means a mechanism that ~~which~~ is  
106 connected to a communications network ~~standard telephone line,~~  
107 operated by means of a keyboard, and used to transmit or receive  
108 signals through telephone lines or other communications service  
109 facilities.

110 (25)-(16) "Telecommunications relay service" means any  
111 telecommunications transmission service that allows a person  
112 with hearing loss ~~who is hearing impaired~~ or speech impairment  
113 ~~speech impaired~~ to communicate by wire or radio in a manner that  
114 is functionally equivalent to the ability of a person who does  
115 not have hearing loss or speech impairment ~~is not hearing~~  
116 ~~impaired or speech impaired~~. Such term includes any service that  
117 enables two-way communication between a person who uses a  
118 telecommunications device or other nonvoice terminal device and  
119 a person who does not use such a device.

120 Section 3. Subsection (1), paragraph (a) of subsection (3),  
121 paragraphs (a), (b), and (e) of subsection (4), and subsections  
122 (5) through (9) of section 427.704, Florida Statutes, are  
123 amended to read:

124 427.704 Powers and duties of the commission.—

125 (1) The commission shall establish, implement, promote, and  
126 oversee the administration of a statewide telecommunications



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127 access system to provide access to telecommunications relay  
128 services by persons with hearing loss or speech impairment or  
129 who are deafblind ~~who are hearing impaired or speech impaired,~~  
130 or others who communicate with them. The telecommunications  
131 access system must ~~shall~~ provide for the purchase and  
132 distribution of specialized telecommunications devices,  
133 equipment, specialized communications technology, and the  
134 establishment of a statewide single provider telecommunications  
135 relay service system that ~~which~~ operates continuously. To  
136 provide telecommunications relay services and distribute  
137 specialized telecommunication devices, equipment, and  
138 specialized communications technology to persons with hearing  
139 loss or speech impairment or who are deafblind ~~who are hearing~~  
140 ~~impaired or speech impaired,~~ at a reasonable cost the commission  
141 shall:

142 (a) Investigate, conduct public hearings, and solicit the  
143 advice and counsel of the advisory committee established  
144 pursuant to s. 427.706 to determine the most cost-effective  
145 method for providing telecommunications relay service and  
146 distributing specialized telecommunications devices, equipment,  
147 and specialized communications technology.

148 (b) Ensure that users of the telecommunications relay  
149 service system pay rates no greater than the rates paid for  
150 functionally equivalent voice communication services with  
151 respect to such factors as duration of the call, time of day,  
152 and distance from the point of origination to the point of  
153 termination.

154 (c) Ensure that the telecommunications access system  
155 protects the privacy of persons to whom services are provided



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156 and that all operators maintain the confidentiality of all relay  
157 service messages.

158 (d) Ensure that the telecommunications relay service system  
159 complies with regulations adopted by the Federal Communications  
160 Commission to implement Title IV of the Americans with  
161 Disabilities Act.

162 (e) Set eligibility requirements for the distribution of  
163 specialized communications technology based on income  
164 qualifications or participation in other state or federal  
165 programs based on income, which requirements must be set at no  
166 less than double but no more than triple the federal poverty  
167 level. Eligibility requirements may not prohibit the  
168 administrator from providing access to specialized  
169 communications technologies if such access has a de minimis  
170 value. This paragraph does not apply to specialized  
171 telecommunications devices using standard telephone lines.

172 (3) (a) The commission shall select a ~~the~~ provider of ~~the~~  
173 telecommunications relay service pursuant to procedures  
174 established by the commission. In selecting a ~~the~~ service  
175 provider, the commission shall take into consideration the cost  
176 of providing ~~the~~ relay service and the interests of the hearing  
177 loss, speech impairment, and deafblind ~~impaired and speech~~  
178 ~~impaired~~ community in having access to a high-quality and  
179 technologically advanced telecommunications system. The  
180 commission shall award the contract to the bidder whose proposal  
181 is the most advantageous to the state, taking into consideration  
182 the following:

183 1. The appropriateness and accessibility of the proposed  
184 telecommunications relay service for the residents ~~citizens~~ of



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185 this the state, including persons with hearing loss or speech  
186 impairment or who are deafblind ~~who are hearing impaired or~~  
187 ~~speech impaired.~~

188 2. The overall quality of the proposed telecommunications  
189 relay service.

190 3. The charges for the proposed telecommunications relay  
191 service system.

192 4. The ability and qualifications of the bidder to provide  
193 the proposed telecommunications relay service as outlined in the  
194 request for proposals.

195 5. Any proposed service enhancements and technological  
196 enhancements which improve service without significantly  
197 increasing cost.

198 6. Any proposed inclusion of provision of assistance to  
199 deaf persons with special needs to access the ~~basic~~  
200 telecommunications system.

201 7. The ability to meet the proposed commencement date for  
202 the telecommunications relay service.

203 8. All other factors listed in the request for proposals.

204 (4) (a) The commission shall establish a mechanism to  
205 recover the costs of implementing and maintaining the services  
206 required pursuant to this part which must ~~shall~~ be applied to  
207 each basic telecommunications access line. In establishing the  
208 recovery mechanism, the commission shall:

209 1. Require all local exchange telecommunications companies  
210 to impose a monthly surcharge on all local exchange  
211 telecommunications company subscribers on an individual access  
212 line basis, except that such surcharge may ~~shall~~ not be imposed  
213 upon more than 25 basic telecommunications access lines per





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214 account bill rendered.

215       2. Require all local exchange telecommunications companies  
216 to include the surcharge as a part of the local service charge  
217 that appears on the customer's bill, except that the local  
218 exchange telecommunications company shall specify the surcharge  
219 on the initial bill to the subscriber and itemize it at least  
220 once annually.

221       3. Allow the local exchange telecommunications company to  
222 deduct and retain 1 percent of the total surcharge amount  
223 collected each month to recover the billing, collecting,  
224 remitting, and administrative costs attributed to the surcharge.

225       (b) The commission shall determine the amount of the  
226 surcharge based upon the amount of funding necessary to  
227 accomplish the purposes of this act and provide the services on  
228 an ongoing basis; however, in no case shall the amount exceed 15  
229 ~~25~~ cents per line per month.

230       (e) From the date of implementing the surcharge, the  
231 commission shall review the amount of the surcharge at least  
232 annually and shall order changes in the amount of the surcharge  
233 as necessary to assure available funds for the provision of the  
234 telecommunications access system established herein. Where the  
235 review of the surcharge determines that excess funds are  
236 available, the commission may order the suspension of the  
237 surcharge for a period that ~~which~~ the commission deems  
238 appropriate. The commission may not increase the surcharge when  
239 excess funds are available.