

Senate Fiscal Agency
P. O. Box 30036
Lansing, Michigan 48909-7536

SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

Telephone: (517) 373-5383
Fax: (517) 373-1986
TDD: (517) 373-0543

Senate Bill 180 (as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator Tony Stamas
Committee: Local, Urban and State Affairs

Date Completed: 3-4-03

RATIONALE

The State collects, compiles, and publishes or otherwise makes available to the public numerous reports, records, and other public information. In some instances, the State has used telephone numbers with a 900 area code for the public to obtain certain information. Typically, when a 900 number is used, a per-minute fee is charged to the caller, and the fee is distributed to the phone company and the entity that established the 900 number (in this instance, the State). Some people believe that the State should not be allowed to operate a 900 number, or other telephone system that charges a caller for access to public information.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Management and Budget Act to prohibit a State agency from using a 900 telephone number or other telephone system that charged a caller for access to public information held or maintained by a State agency.

Proposed MCL 18.1224

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

Reportedly, 900 numbers were used by the Lottery Bureau for access to winning numbers, and the Department of Consumer and Industry Services for information about licensed health professionals. The last 900 number was closed in January, according to the State.

The use of 900 numbers by State agencies, in essence, allows them to raise revenue for access to information that is available to the public. No State agency should be allowed to make a profit from individuals seeking public information. While the use of these numbers by the State was limited in the past, their use should be prevented in the future.

Opposing Argument

Any information the State had that was made available through a 900 number also was available through the mail, the Internet, or a toll-free telephone number. Reportedly, 900 numbers were used to allow individuals, for a charge, to obtain desired information more quickly.

Response: It has been reported that, in limited instances, information provided by phone was available only through a 900 number.

Legislative Analyst: George Towne

FISCAL IMPACT

The Department of Consumer and Industry Services previously operated 900 phone lines regarding regulated occupations. The last line was terminated in January 2003. From October 1, 2002, through the date of elimination, the line generated \$8,145. The bill would prohibit the State from generating revenue through this method in the future.

Fiscal Analyst: Bill Bowerman

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This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan Senate staff for use by the Senate in its deliberations and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.