

**Introduced by Senator Polanco**

February 20, 2002

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An act to add Section 2890.2 to the Public Utilities Code, relating to telecommunications.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

SB 1563, as introduced, Polanco. Telecommunications: consumer rights.

Existing law authorizes the Public Utilities Commission to regulate public utilities, including telephone corporations.

This bill would require the commission, in developing its telecommunications priorities for the 21st century, to take action in order to reaffirm the highest priority for maintaining the rights of every citizen of the state to access quality telecommunications services. Specifically, the bill would require the commission to develop a strategy to ensure that consumer choice is provided, articulate the vision of an improved telecommunications infrastructure, encourage the development of a broadly accessible telecommunications network that ultimately leads to the future development of an integrated voice, video, and data telecommunications system, and develop a low income market plan that deploys innovative strategies to serve low-income customers. The bill would also require the commission to support the basic rights of the state's consumers to products and services consistent with the state's public trust obligation to universal, accessible, and affordable telecommunications services, to quality service and performance of telecommunications tools, to fair and honest treatment, including prompt and equitable resolution of billing and service problems, to public information that is necessary to allow consumers to make timely and informed choices about products and services, to protect and



preserve the confidentiality of consumers' individual records and use patterns, to choose telecommunications services from among a wide array of products and services accessible to all consumers, and to be heard by telecommunications providers to facilitate the development of fair and consumer friendly policy formation by telecommunications providers.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.  
State-mandated local program: no.

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

- 1 SECTION 1. Section 2890.2 is added to the Public Utilities  
2 Code, to read:  
3 2890.2. The commission, in developing its  
4 telecommunications priorities for the 21st century, shall do all of  
5 the following in order to reaffirm the highest priority for  
6 maintaining the rights of every citizen of the state to access quality  
7 telecommunications services:  
8 (a) Develop a strategy to ensure that consumer choice is  
9 provided within a public policy framework that does not expose  
10 major segments of the state's telecommunications market,  
11 particularly low-income customers, to the development of a public  
12 infrastructure that is likely to become inferior to information age  
13 infrastructure targeted to more lucrative markets by competition.  
14 (b) Articulate the vision of an improved telecommunications  
15 infrastructure that actively considers the risks inherent in a purely  
16 competitive policy that relegates the state's historical investment  
17 in a copper transmission system to a second tier network as more  
18 competitive fiber networks capture lucrative portions of the  
19 market.  
20 (c) Encourage the development of a broadly accessible  
21 telecommunications network, including an appropriate regulatory  
22 and financial support structure and mechanism for utilization of  
23 public and private partnerships, as needed, that ultimately leads to  
24 the future development of an integrated voice, video, and data  
25 telecommunications system.  
26 (d) Develop a low income market plan that deploys innovative  
27 strategies to serve low income consumers.



1 (e) Support the following general principles as the basic rights  
2 of the state's consumers in the 21st century telecommunications  
3 market:

4 (1) The right to products and services consistent with the state's  
5 public trust obligation to universal, accessible, and affordable  
6 telecommunications services.

7 (2) The right to quality service and performance of  
8 telecommunications tools.

9 (3) The right to fair and honest treatment, including prompt and  
10 equitable resolution of billing and service problems.

11 (4) The right to all public information that is necessary to allow  
12 consumers to make timely and informed choices about  
13 telecommunications products and services.

14 (5) The right to protect and preserve the confidentiality of  
15 consumers' individual records and use patterns.

16 (6) The right to choose telecommunications services from  
17 among a wide array of products and services accessible to all  
18 consumers.

19 (7) The right to be heard by telecommunications providers to  
20 facilitate the development of fair and consumer friendly policy  
21 formation by telecommunications providers.

