

**ASSEMBLY BILL**

**No. 818**

**Introduced by Assembly Member Knox**

February 24, 1999

An act to add Section 7934 to the Public Utilities Code, relating to telecommunications.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 818, as introduced, Knox. New area codes.

Existing federal law provides for a coordinator for California area code relief. Existing law establishes a process for that coordinator and providers, as defined, to develop an area code relief plan, as prescribed. Existing federal regulations prohibit an area code from being assigned based solely on the provision of a specific type of telecommunications service or use of a particular technology.

This bill would require the Public Utilities Commission to preserve existing area codes for land-based telecommunications, to ensure that retired telephone numbers within a given area code are reestablished as usable numbers before new area codes are established within a region, and to apply for a waiver of the existing federal regulations described above, so that the commission may consider the application of separate area codes for land-based telecommunication services and non-land-based telecommunication services. The bill would require the commission, on or before January 1, 2001, to submit to the Legislature a report on the implementation of those provisions.

The bill would prohibit the commission from establishing or implementing any new area code until the commission either begins, as new area codes become necessary, to apply separate new area codes for land-based telecommunication services and non-land-based telecommunications services such as cellular telephone and pager services, if the commission receives a waiver of those existing federal regulations from the Federal Communications Commission, or the commission proposes, and the Legislature approves, a plan, alternative to the use of technology-based area codes, as specified, to alleviate the undue hardship currently experienced by telecommunications customers caused by the creation of new area codes.

The bill would make related legislative findings and declarations.

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. This act shall be known and may be cited
- 2 as the Consumer Area Code Relief Act of 1999.
- 3 SEC. 2. The Legislature finds and declares all of the
- 4 following:
- 5 (a) The number of area codes in this state has more
- 6 than doubled since 1991.
- 7 (b) The proliferation of area codes has caused undue
- 8 hardship on citizens of this state, who have begun to be
- 9 forced into new area codes after years of having the same
- 10 telephone number.
- 11 (c) That proliferation has substantially increased costs
- 12 to businesses, individuals, and government agencies.
- 13 (d) New area codes require the replacement of
- 14 business cards and letterhead stationery, and companies
- 15 must use employee time contacting their customers to
- 16 ensure that those customers are able to continue to reach
- 17 the affected company.



(e) The proliferation of area codes has also reduced worker productivity as employees begin using new and unfamiliar area codes.

(f) For all of the reasons stated above, it is necessary for the Public Utilities Commission to stop area code proliferation and review their existing practice of establishing new area code regions and the creation of area code overlays.

SEC. 3. Section 7934 is added to the Public Utilities Code, to read:

7934. (a) The commission shall do all of the following:

(1) Preserve existing area codes for land-based telecommunications whenever possible, for as long as possible.

(2) Ensure that any and all retired telephone numbers within a given area code are reestablished as usable numbers before new area codes are established within a region.

(3) Apply for a waiver of existing regulations adopted by the Federal Communications Commission that prohibit an area code from being assigned based solely on the provision of a specific type of telecommunications service or the use of a particular technology (47 C.F.R. 52.19(c)(3)(1)), so that the commission may consider the application of separate area codes for land-based telecommunication services and non-land-based telecommunication services such as cellular telephone and pager services.

(4) On or before January 1, 2001, submit to the Legislature a report on the progress of the commission in the implementation of this subdivision.

(b) The commission shall not establish or implement any new area code until one of the following events occurs:

(1) If, after the commission receives a waiver from the Federal Communications Commission as described in paragraph (3) of subdivision (a), the commission begins, as new area codes become necessary, to apply separate new area codes for land-based telecommunication

1 services and non-land-based services such as cellular  
2 telephone and pager services.

3 (2) The commission proposes, and the Legislature  
4 approves, a plan, alternative to the use of  
5 technology-based area codes, as described in paragraph  
6 (1), to alleviate the undue hardship currently  
7 experienced by telecommunications customers as a result  
8 of the creation of new area codes.

O

