

HOUSE No.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Steven M. Walsh

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the passage of the accompanying bill:

An Act regulating the wireless telephone industry.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

Steven M. Walsh

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

11th Essex

[SIMILAR MATTER FILED IN PREVIOUS SESSION
SEE HOUSE, NO. 3389 OF 2007-2008.]

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the Year Two Thousand and Nine

AN ACT REGULATING THE WIRELESS TELEPHONE INDUSTRY.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 Chapter 93 of the General Laws, Official 2006 Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after
2 section 107, the following sections:—

3

4 Section 108. Short title. Section 108 to 116, inclusive, shall be known and may be cited as the "Wireless
5 Telephone Consumer Protection Act."

6

7 Section 109. Definitions.

8 "Department" means "Department of Telecommunications and Energy" as defined by Mass. Gen. Laws

9 ch. 25 § 1.

10 "Wireless telephone services" means commercial mobile radio services as defined by the federal
11 Telecommunications Act, 47 U.S.C. § 332(c).

12 "Wireless telephone service provider" means any entity that provides wireless telephone service within
13 the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

14 "Wireless telephone number information" means the telephone number, electronic address, and any
15 other identifying information by which a calling party may reach a subscriber to commercial mobile
16 services, and which is assigned by a wireless telephone service provider to such subscriber.

17

18 Section 110. Disclosure requirements for plans and contracts for wireless telephone service.

19 (a) The Department of Telecommunications and Energy, within 180 days of the passage of this Act,
20 shall promulgate regulations requiring that any publication, including publication on the Internet, of
21 a wireless telephone service provider concerning the terms of its plans or contracts for wireless
22 telephone service shall set forth, in a plain and conspicuous manner, the following information:

23 (1) Information on charges, including calling-from area, monthly base charge, per-minute charges
24 for minutes not included in the plan, and the method of calculating minutes charged.

25 (2) Information on the minutes included in the plan, including weekday/daytime,
26 nights/weekends, or other differing charges; long-distance; roaming; incoming; and directory
27 assistance.

28 (3) Information on plan or contract terms, including length of contract, early or other termination
29 fees, trial periods, and start-up fees.

30 (4) Information on taxes to be collected by the carrier for, and paid to, a state, local, or other
31 governmental agency.

32 (5) Information on surcharges imposed by the carrier for the costs of compliance with regulations
33 or for other purposes.

34 (6) Any other information that the Department considers appropriate to ensure that consumers of
35 wireless telephone service are fully informed of the terms of the plan or contract.

36 (b) Wireless telephone service providers must provide the information required by this section to a
37 consumer prior to entering into any contract with a consumer for wireless telephone service.

38 (c) The Department shall adopt rules requiring that the information required by this section be
39 published by wireless telephone service providers in a tabular format, in a clear and uniform
40 manner, and in at least 10 point font. This format shall be designed to ensure that consumers may
41 accurately compare the true cost of services among wireless service providers.

42 (d) Wireless telephone service providers must meet the disclosure requirements in this section in
43 advertising to the extent the medium allows.

44

45 Section 111. Disclosure requirements for wireless telephone service coverage.

46 (a) Each wireless telephone service provider shall make available maps showing the wireless
47 telephone service area of such provider and the wireless telephone service area of such provider
48 within Massachusetts. Such maps shall contain the maximum practicable level of granularity and
49 shall be updated quarterly.

50 (b) Each map of a service area under paragraph (a) shall be provided to a consumer (i) upon the
51 request of the consumer and (ii) whenever a plan or contract for the service is entered into.

52 (c) Each map of a service area under paragraph (a) shall be available (i) on the Internet web site of the
53 provider concerned; and (ii) on the Internet website of the Department.

54

55 Section 112. Service Quality Information.

56 (a) The Department shall monitor the quality of wireless telephone service provided in Massachusetts
57 by requiring semiannual reports by wireless telephone service providers on the following:

58 1) Dropped calls.

59 2) Blocked calls.

60 3) Known coverage gaps (including average signal strength) or dead zones.

61 4) Predicted street level signal strength.

62 5) Any other matters the Department considers appropriate.

63 (b) In monitoring the quality of wireless telephone service under paragraph (a), the Department shall
64 establish an Internet web site at which members of the public can submit to the Department their
65 comments and views on the quality of such service. The Department shall also accept written
66 complaints by mail.

67 (c) The Department shall make available to wireless telephone service providers and the public on a
68 semiannual basis information on the quality of wireless telephone service provided in
69 Massachusetts.

70

71 Section 113. Contract extension, modification, or rescission.

72 (a) No contract for wireless telephone service shall be for a term longer than twelve months, except that
73 upon expiration of the contract, the wireless telephone service provider may offer to the subscriber the
74 right to renew the contract for a similar, shorter or longer period not to exceed twelve months.

75 (b) An extension of a contract for wireless telephone service shall not be valid unless the extension of the
76 contract is in writing and signed by the subscriber, or confirmed in writing and signed by the subscriber
77 within seven days.

78 (c) A wireless telephone service provider must provide subscribers with written notice of any change in
79 rates, terms, or conditions of service at least thirty days before the change is to take effect. If any such
80 change will result in higher rates or more restrictions on service or otherwise will result in a material,
81 adverse change for such subscriber, the subscriber may, within such thirty day period, terminate the
82 service without penalty and receive a pro rata refund of the charges, if any, paid for the handset used
83 for the service. The notice of change must inform the subscriber of the right to terminate the contract,
84 the right to a handset refund, and the steps to take to implement such a termination.

85 (a) A contract for wireless service may be canceled upon the request of the subscriber for any reason
86 during the first thirty days. There shall be no penalty or other costs to the subscriber for any
87 cancellation during these thirty days, except that the subscriber shall be responsible for the cost of
88 the service used during the time period the contract was in effect.

89

90 Section 114. Contract billing.

- 91 (a) A wireless telephone service provider shall provide bills for wireless telephone services that are
92 clearly organized and clearly describe in plain language the products and services for which charges
93 are imposed, and that conform to format standards established by the Department.
- 94 (b) Taxes and fees which are required by federal, state, or local statute or regulation to be collected
95 from the subscriber shall be set forth in a separate section of the bill and shall be itemized
96 separately. No charge which is not required to be recovered from subscribers may be included in
97 this section of the bill.
- 98 (c) Roaming or off-network charges shall be itemized on the subscriber's bill within sixty days of the
99 call being placed, and such roaming or off-network charges shall identify the date and originating
100 location of the call.
- 101 (d) Upon the request of a subscriber, a wireless telephone services provider shall provide an itemized
102 bill to the subscriber at no cost to the subscriber.
- 103 (e) Charges associated with the use of wireless telephone equipment or services shall not be the
104 liability of the subscriber if such use was unauthorized by the subscriber due to loss or theft,
105 provided that such loss or theft is promptly reported to the wireless telephone service provider.
- 106 (f) The Department shall promulgate regulations implementing this section and establishing
107 complaint handling procedures within the Department for billing disputes between wireless
108 telephone service providers and subscribers.
- 109 (g) A wireless telephone service provider shall refrain from terminating a subscriber's service for
110 nonpayment so long as the subscriber's billing complaint is pending before the Department and for
111 fifteen days thereafter, or for such period as the Department for good cause shall establish,
112 provided that as a condition of continued service during the pendency of any such dispute, the

113 subscriber shall pay the undisputed portions of any bill for service and any amounts the Department
114 determines are necessary to fairly compensate the wireless telephone provider for services
115 rendered while the complaint is pending and fifteen days thereafter.

116

117 Section 115. Wireless Customer Privacy.

118 (a) A wireless telephone service provider, or any direct or indirect affiliate or agent of a provider,
119 providing the name and wireless telephone number information of a subscriber for inclusion in any
120 directory of any form, or selling, leasing, licensing or sharing the contents of any directory database,
121 or any portion or segment thereof, shall not include the wireless telephone number information of
122 any subscriber without first obtaining the express consent of that subscriber. The provider's form for
123 obtaining the subscriber's express consent shall meet all of the following requirements:

124 (1) It shall be a separate document that is not attached to any other document.

125 (2) It shall be signed and dated by the subscriber.

126 (3) It shall be unambiguous, legible, and conspicuously disclose that, by signing, the subscriber is
127 consenting to have the subscriber's wireless telephone number information sold or licensed as
128 part of a list of subscribers and the subscriber's wireless telephone number information may be
129 included in a publicly available directory.

130 (4) If under the subscriber's calling plan the subscriber may be billed for receiving unsolicited calls
131 or text messaging from a telemarketer, the provider's form shall be unambiguous, legible, and
132 conspicuously disclose that, by consenting to have the subscriber's wireless telephone number
133 information sold or licensed as part of a list of subscribers or be included in a publicly available

134 directory, the subscriber may incur additional charges for receiving unsolicited calls or text
135 messages.

136 (b) A subscriber who provides express prior consent pursuant to paragraph (a) may revoke that
137 consent at any time. A wireless telephone service provider shall comply with the subscriber's
138 request to opt out within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 60 days.

139 (c) A subscriber shall not be charged for making the choice to not be listed in a directory.

140 (d) This section does not apply to the provision of wireless telephone number information to the
141 following parties for the purposes indicated:

142 (1) To a collection agency, to the extent disclosures made by the provider are exclusively for the
143 collection of the subscriber's unpaid debt to the provider.

144 (2) To any law enforcement agency, fire protection agency, public health agency, public
145 environmental health agency, city or county emergency services planning agency, or private for-
146 profit agency operating under contract with, and at the direction of, one or more of these
147 agencies, for the exclusive purpose of responding to a 911 call or communicating an imminent
148 threat to life or property.

149 (3) To a lawful process issued under state or federal law.

150 (4) To a telephone corporation providing service between service areas for the provision to the
151 subscriber of telephone service between service areas, or to third parties for the limited
152 purpose of providing billing services.

153 (5) To a telephone corporation to effectuate a subscriber's request to transfer the customer's
154 assigned telephone number from the customer's existing provider of telecommunications
155 services to a new provider of telecommunications services.

156 (6) To the Department pursuant to its jurisdiction and control over wireless telephone providers.

157 (e) No telephone corporation, nor any official or employee thereof, shall be subject to criminal or civil
158 liability for the release of subscriber information as authorized by this section.

159

160 Section 116. Enforcement.

161 (a) The Department shall have the power and authority to enforce the provisions of this Act. The
162 Department shall have the power, consistent with federal law, to assess a penalty not to exceed one
163 thousand dollars against any company that neglects or knowingly fails to comply with any
164 requirement of this Act.

165 (b) Failure to comply with any provision of this Act or any regulation promulgated in accordance with
166 this Act shall constitute an unfair or deceptive act or practice under chapter ninety-three A.

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