

March 15, 2000

Chairman Senator Moen and Committee Members
Committee on Health, Utilities, Veterans and Military Affairs
Senate Bill 454

Dear Chairman Senator Moen and Committee Members:

It came to my attention today, that there will be a hearing on Thursday morning regarding the above bill. Since I brought this matter to Senator Lazich's attention, I would have liked to have been present to provide testimony on the matter. However due to my work schedule, I am unable on such short notice to attend tomorrow's hearing. I would, however, like to provide testimony and am therefore writing this letter to express my support for such a bill.

Recently my cellular company, Primeco, decided to stop providing an itemized list of my calls made during the billing month. Instead all I received was a lump sum total plus appropriate taxes. After contacting Primeco, I was told they were now imposing an additional fee in order to provide this information.

I felt this was completely improper. After checking with the state regulators, I learned that there were no laws regulating cellular companies in these matters. I then contacted Senator Lazich's office to bring what I feel is a serious consumer matter to her attention.

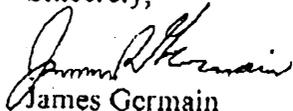
I believe that a company that bills a consumer periodically for services which are based on individual purchases for services which are priced at varying rates (in this case based on length of time) should be required to provide the consumer with an itemized bill. If not, the consumer has no ability to determine if they are being properly billed. What Primeco has now done is to charge the consumer extra in order to allow that same consumer the ability to determine if they are being properly billed. This is unbelievable. In my mind it is no different than a credit card company that would send me a monthly bill with only a total. I would have no idea if I was being properly billed by the credit card company for all of my monthly purchases from various vendors.

Any other company providing services is required to provide a detailed billing sufficient for the consumer to audit to determine the correctness of the bill. Apparently there is currently a loophole that does not allow our state regulatory agencies to regulate cellular companies and provide consumers with such a minimum level of protection. This loophole needs to be closed.

I find it hard to fathom a reasonable argument against providing this type of basic consumer protection. From a legislative viewpoint, it should be an easy bill to approve since it certainly is in the best interests of your constituencies.

I therefore urge this committee to take the appropriate action, approve this bill and forward it out of committee to the legislature for approval during this session.

Sincerely,



James Germain
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