

ever authorizing these charges.

Common logic would dictate that both of these bills should not be signed, since it would make no sense at all to have a study made in order that all sides of the matter be explored, and then to make the decision in advance of the study even being commenced. But that is begging the question. The Legislature passed both bills and recalled neither, and some explanation as to why I chose Senate Bill 509 over House Bill 1071 is in order.

I do not know at this point whether or not a permanent legislative prohibition against directory assistance charges would be a wise policy. The argument in favor of disallowing such charges is that they would penalize handicapped and elderly callers who have difficulty using the telephone directory book. It is also asserted that these books are occasionally missing or damaged near coin operated public telephones, and that not enough of them are distributed to homes and businesses.

On the other hand, it is asserted that directory assistance calls - dialing "411" - costs the telephone company some \$13.5 million each year (expected to grow to \$33 million by 1985) which must be borne ultimately by all telephone users. This expense adds nearly \$7.00 to each customer's annual bill. I am advised that only 9% of Maryland subscribers account for 50% of these directory assistance calls. I am also informed that at least thirteen public utility commissioners around the country have authorized directory assistance charges, and that in New York, the public saved \$25 million during the first year in which these charges were permitted.

I cite these facts not to indicate predisposition as to ultimate question, but only to point out that reasonable arguments can be made on both sides of the issue, and that, in my judgment, a clear and convincing case has yet to be made one way or the other. Before the Legislature acts further to assume a role traditionally committed to the Public Service Commission, it should have the benefit of the study required by Senate Bill 509. In the meanwhile, the objective of House Bill 1071 has been achieved by the enactment of Senate Bill 509.

For these reasons, I have vetoed House Bill 1071.

Sincerely,
Marvin Mandel
Governor

C