

Commission from authorizing telephone company charges to be levied for directory assistance calls made by residential customers.

May 26, 1977

Honorable John Hanson Briscoe  
Speaker of the House of Delegates  
State House  
Annapolis, Maryland 21404

Déar Mr. Speaker:

In accordance with Article II, Section 17 of the Maryland Constitution, I have today vetoed House Bill 875.

This bill prohibits the Maryland Public Service Commission from authorizing telephone company charges for directory assistance calls made by residential customers.

This is the second year in which the General Assembly has presented me with inconsistent bills on this issue. Last year, the Legislature enacted a bill similar to House Bill 875, flatly prohibiting the Commission from authorizing a charge for directory assistance calls, as well as a bill proscribing such a charge for one year only. I signed the latter bill in order to allow the Public Service Commission to study the benefits and detriments of directory assistance charges, which was the represented purpose of the moratorium bill.

The Commission did study the matter, and presented a report to the General Assembly showing that the imposition of directory assistance charges would allow for a general reduction in the basic phone bills of nearly all residential subscribers. The Legislature responded by once again passing two inconsistent bills, from which I am unable to determine the true legislative policy.

House Bill 875, as noted, flatly prohibits the Commission from ever authorizing any charge for directory assistance calls. Senate Bill 382, which, as introduced, was identical to House Bill 875, was consciously amended and passed so as to permit such charges, except as to (1) the first twelve calls a month from a residential user, (2) calls dialed by handicapped persons unable to use the telephone book, and (3) calls dialed by other classes of residential users exempted from a charge by the Commission.

Since the General Assembly apparently desires that I set the State policy on this issue by presenting contradictory bills that cannot both be signed, I have chosen the less restrictive bill - Senate Bill 382. That