

Florida

Department of Education

Bill Number: CS/CS/HB 529, Enrolled

Bill Title: Consumer Choice Act of 2007

Bill Sponsor: Policy & Budget Council, Jobs & Entrepreneurship Council, and Representative Traviesa

Effective Date: Upon becoming law

DOE Contact: Linda Champion, Deputy Commissioner, Finance and Operations, (850) 245-0406

Executive Summary:

- This act establishes the authority to issue statewide cable and video franchises within the Department of State (DOS) and designates DOS as the state franchising authority. The act removes local government authority to negotiate cable service franchises.
- Upon request of a municipality or county, the non-incumbent company will provide within a reasonable period of time comparable, complementary basic cable or video service offerings to public K-12 schools, public libraries, or government buildings as required in the incumbent's existing franchise.
- Public, educational, or governmental (PEG) access channels must provide an average of 10 hours of programming per day. Five of the 10 hours of programming may not be repeated that day. Static information screens or bulletin-boards will not count toward the 10 hours. If school districts or community colleges do not have sufficient programming material, they may rebroadcast programming from the Florida Knowledge Network at no cost. This method of programming is current practice and will meet the requirements of this act.
- PEGs are required to send digital signals, but the equipment for conversion from analog to digital is inexpensive.
- Franchise fees will no longer go to the county and local governments. Therefore, PEG channels will no longer receive any funds from franchise fees. The impact will vary by municipality.
- The act makes no change to copyright issues.
- PEGs will continue to be assigned a lower channel number and will continue to be available in the basic cable package. A cable company will not relocate a PEG channel as long as the programming meets the requirements in the law. If a PEG does not meet these programming requirements and the cable company wants to relocate the channel, the cable company must notify its customers and the applicable municipality or county at least 120 days prior to relocating it.
- Each state agency that provides benefits to persons eligible for Lifeline service shall undertake, in cooperation with the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Education, the Public Service Commission, the Office of Public Counsel, and telecommunications companies providing Lifeline services, the development of procedures to promote Lifeline participation.

General Implementation Timeline:

Effective date Upon becoming law

December 31, 2007 or earlier The Public Service Commission and the Department of Children and Family Services must adopt rules creating procedures to automatically enroll eligible customers in Lifeline service