

Assembly Bill No. 1715

CHAPTER 123

An act to amend Sections 5810, 5830, 5840, 5850, 5860, 5870, 5880, 5890, 5900, 5910, 5930, and 5960 of the Public Utilities Code, and to amend Section 107.7 of the Revenue and Taxation Code, relating to cable and video service.

[Approved by Governor July 20, 2007. Filed with Secretary of State July 20, 2007.]

SEC. 5. Section 5860 of the Public Utilities Code is amended to read:

5860. (a) The holder of a state franchise that offers video service within the jurisdiction of the local entity shall calculate and remit to the local entity a state franchise fee, adopted pursuant to subdivision (q) of Section 5840, as provided in this section. The obligation to remit the franchise fee to a local entity begins immediately upon provision of video service within that local entity's jurisdiction. However, the remittance shall not be due until the time of the first quarterly payment required under subdivision (h) that is at least 180 days after the provision of service began. The fee remitted to a city or city and county shall be based on gross revenues, as defined in subdivision (d), derived from the provision of video service within that jurisdiction. The fee remitted to a county shall be based on gross revenues earned within the unincorporated area of the county. No fee under this section shall become due unless the local entity provides documentation to the holder of the state franchise supporting the percentage paid by the incumbent cable operator serving the area within the local entity's jurisdiction. The fee shall be calculated as a percentage of the holder's gross revenues, as defined in subdivision (d). The fee remitted to the local entity pursuant to this section may be used by the local entity for any lawful purpose.

(b) The state franchise fee shall be a percentage of the holder's gross revenues, as defined in subdivision (d).

(c) No local entity or any other political subdivision of this state may demand any additional fees or charges or other remuneration of any kind from the holder of a state franchise based solely on its status as a provider of video or cable services other than as set forth in this division and may not demand the use of any other calculation method or definition of gross revenues. However, nothing in this section shall be construed to limit a local entity's ability to impose utility user taxes and other generally applicable taxes, fees, and charges under other applicable provisions of state law that are applied in a nondiscriminatory and competitively neutral manner.

(d) For purposes of this section, the term "gross revenues" means all revenue actually received by the holder of a state franchise, as determined in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, that is derived from the operation of the holder's network to provide cable or video service within the jurisdiction of the local entity, including all of the following:

- (1) All charges billed to subscribers for any and all cable service or video

service provided by the holder of a state franchise, including all revenue related to programming provided to the subscriber, equipment rentals, late fees, and insufficient fund fees.

(2) Franchise fees imposed on the holder of a state franchise by this section that are passed through to, and paid by, the subscribers.

(3) Compensation received by the holder of a state franchise that is derived from the operation of the holder's network to provide cable service or video service with respect to commissions that are paid to the holder of a state franchise as compensation for promotion or exhibition of any products or services on the holder's network, such as a "home shopping" or similar channel, subject to paragraph (4) of subdivision (e).

(4) A pro rata portion of all revenue derived by the holder of a state franchise or its affiliates pursuant to compensation arrangements for advertising derived from the operation of the holder's network to provide video service within the jurisdiction of the local entity, subject to paragraph (1) of subdivision (e). The allocation shall be based on the number of subscribers in the local entity divided by the total number of subscribers in relation to the relevant regional or national compensation arrangement.

(e) For purposes of this section, the term "gross revenue" set forth in subdivision (d) does not include any of the following:

(1) Amounts not actually received, even if billed, such as bad debt; refunds, rebates, or discounts to subscribers or other third parties; or revenue imputed from the provision of cable services or video services for free or at reduced rates to any person as required or allowed by law, including, but not limited to, the provision of these services to public institutions, public schools, governmental agencies, or employees except that forgone revenue chosen not to be received in exchange for trades, barter, services, or other items of value shall be included in gross revenue.

(2) Revenues received by any affiliate or any other person in exchange for supplying goods or services used by the holder of a state franchise to provide cable services or video services. However, revenue received by an affiliate of the holder from the affiliate's provision of cable or video service shall be included in gross revenue as follows:

(A) To the extent that treating the revenue as revenue of the affiliate, instead of revenue of the holder, would have the effect of evading the payment of fees that would otherwise be paid to the local entity.

(B) The revenue is not otherwise subject to fees to be paid to the local entity.

(3) Revenue derived from services classified as noncable services or nonvideo services under federal law, including, but not limited to, revenue derived from telecommunications services and information services, other than cable services or video services, and any other revenues attributed by the holder of a state franchise to noncable services or nonvideo services in accordance with Federal Communications Commission rules, regulations, standards, or orders.

(4) Revenue paid by subscribers to "home shopping" or similar networks

directly from the sale of merchandise through any home shopping channel offered as part of the cable services or video services. However, commissions or other compensation paid to the holder of a state franchise by "home shopping" or similar networks for the promotion or exhibition of products or services shall be included in gross revenue.

(5) Revenue from the sale of cable services or video services for resale in which the reseller is required to collect a fee similar to the franchise fee from the reseller's subscribers.

(6) Amounts billed to, and collected from, subscribers to recover any tax, fee, or surcharge imposed by any governmental entity on the holder of a state franchise, including, but not limited to, sales and use taxes, gross receipts taxes, excise taxes, utility users taxes, public service taxes, communication taxes, and any other fee not imposed by this section.

(7) Revenue from the sale of capital assets or surplus equipment not used by the purchaser to receive cable services or video services from the seller of those assets or surplus equipment.

(8) Revenue from directory or Internet advertising revenue, including, but not limited to, yellow pages, white pages, banner advertisement, and electronic publishing.

(9) Revenue received as reimbursement by programmers of specific, identifiable marketing costs incurred by the holder of a state franchise for the introduction of new programming.

(10) Security deposits received from subscribers, excluding security deposits applied to the outstanding balance of a subscriber's account and thereby taken into revenue.

(f) For the purposes of this section, in the case of a video service that may be bundled or integrated functionally with other services, capabilities, or applications, the state franchise fee shall be applied only to the gross revenue, as defined in subdivision (d), attributable to video service. Where the holder of a state franchise or any affiliate bundles, integrates, ties, or combines video services with nonvideo services creating a bundled package, so that subscribers pay a single fee for more than one class of service or receive a discount on video services, gross revenues shall be determined based on an equal allocation of the package discount, that is, the total price of the individual classes of service at advertised rates compared to the package price, among all classes of service comprising the package. The holder's offering a bundled package shall not be deemed a promotional activity. If the holder of a state franchise does not offer any component of the bundled package separately, the holder of a state franchise shall declare a stated retail value for each component based on reasonable comparable prices for the product or service for the purpose of determining franchise fees based on the package discount.

(g) For the purposes of determining gross revenue under this division, a video service provider shall use the same method of determining revenues under generally accepted accounting principals as that which the video service provider uses in determining revenues for the purpose of reporting

to national and state regulatory agencies.

(h) The state franchise fee shall be remitted to the applicable local entity quarterly, within 45 days after the end of the quarter for that calendar quarter. Each payment shall be accompanied by a summary explaining the basis for the calculation of the state franchise fee. If the holder does not pay the franchise fee when due, the holder shall pay a late payment charge at a rate per year equal to the highest prime lending rate during the period of delinquency, plus 1 percent. If the holder has overpaid the franchise fee, it may deduct the overpayment from its next quarterly payment.

(i) Not more than once annually, a local entity may examine the business records of a holder of a state franchise to the extent reasonably necessary to ensure compensation in accordance with this section. The holder shall keep all business records reflecting any gross revenues, even if there is a change in ownership, for at least four years after those revenues are recognized by the holder on its books and records. If the examination discloses that the holder has underpaid franchise fees by more than 5 percent during the examination period, the holder shall pay all of the reasonable and actual costs of the examination. If the examination discloses that the holder has not underpaid franchise fees, the local entity shall pay all of the reasonable and actual costs of the examination. In every other instance, each party shall bear its own costs of the examination. Any claims by a local entity that compensation is not in accordance with subdivision (a), and any claims for refunds or other corrections to the remittance of the holder of a state franchise, shall be made within three years and 45 days of the end of the quarter for which compensation is remitted, or three years from the date of the remittance, whichever is later. Either a local entity or the holder may, in the event of a dispute concerning compensation under this section, bring an action in a court of competent jurisdiction.

(j) The holder of a state franchise may identify and collect the amount of the state franchise fee as a separate line item on the regular bill of each subscriber.