Public Law 95-234
95th Congress

An Act

To amend the Communications Act of 1934 to provide for the regulation of utility pole attachments.

Feb. 21, 1978
[H.R. 7442]

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That this Act may be cited as the "Communications Act Amendments of 1978".

Communications Act Amendments of 1978.
47 USC 609 note.

SEC. 2. Section 503(b) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 503(b)) is amended to read as follows:

"(b) Any person who is determined by the Commission, in accordance with paragraph (3) or (4) of this subsection, to have—

"(A) willfully or repeatedly failed to comply substantially with the terms and conditions of any license, permit, certificate, or other instrument or authorization issued by the Commission;

"(B) willfully or repeatedly failed to comply with any of the provisions of this Act or of any rule, regulation, or order issued by the Commission under this Act or under any treaty, convention, or other agreement to which the United States is a party and which is binding upon the United States;

"(C) violated any provision of section 317(c) or 509(a) of this Act; or

47 USC 317, 509.

"(D) violated any provision of section 1304, 1343, or 1464 of title 18, United States Code;

shall be liable to the United States for a forfeiture penalty. A forfeiture penalty under this subsection shall be in addition to any other penalty provided for by this Act; except that this subsection shall not apply to any conduct which is subject to forfeiture under title II, part II or III of title III, or section 507 of this Act.

Forfeiture penalties.
47 USC 201, 351, 381, 507.

"(2) The amount of any forfeiture penalty determined under this subsection shall not exceed $2,000 for each violation. Each day of a continuing violation shall constitute a separate offense, but the total forfeiture penalty which may be imposed under this subsection, for acts or omissions described in paragraph (1) of this subsection and set forth in the notice or the notice of apparent liability issued under this subsection, shall not exceed—

Violations.

"(A) $20,000, if the violator is (i) a common carrier subject to the provisions of this Act, (ii) a broadcast station licensee or permittee, or (iii) a cable television operator; or

"(B) $5,000, in any case not covered by subparagraph (A).

Penalty assessment.

The amount of such forfeiture penalty shall be assessed by the Commission, or its designee, by written notice. In determining the amount of such a forfeiture penalty, the Commission or its designee shall take into account the nature, circumstances, extent, and gravity of the prohibited acts committed and, with respect to the violator, the degree of culpability, any history of prior offenses, ability to pay, and such other matters as justice may require.

Penalty determinations, notice and review.

"(3)(A) At the discretion of the Commission, a forfeiture penalty may be determined against a person under this subsection after notice and an opportunity for a hearing before the Commission or an administrative law judge thereof in accordance with section 554 of title 5, United States Code. Any person against whom a forfeiture penalty

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is determined under this paragraph may obtain review thereof pursuant to section 402(a).

47 USC 402.

Unpaid assessment recovery, referral to Attorney General.

"(B) If any person fails to pay an assessment of a forfeiture penalty determined under subparagraph (A) of this paragraph, after it has become a final and unappealable order or after the appropriate court has entered final judgment in favor of the Commission, the Commission shall refer the matter to the Attorney General of the United States, who shall recover the amount assessed in any appropriate district court of the United States. In such action, the validity and appropriateness of the final order imposing the forfeiture penalty shall not be subject to review.

Apparent liability notice.

"(4) Except as provided in paragraph (3) of this subsection, no forfeiture penalty shall be imposed under this subsection against any person unless and until—

"(A) the Commission issues a notice of apparent liability, in writing, with respect to such person;

"(B) such notice has been received by such person, or until the Commission has sent such notice to the last known address of such person, by registered or certified mail; and

"(C) such person is granted an opportunity to show, in writing, within such reasonable period of time as the Commission prescribes by rule or regulation, why no such forfeiture penalty should be imposed.

Such a notice shall (i) identify each specific provision, term, and condition of any Act, rule, regulation, order, treaty, convention, or other agreement, license, permit, certificate, instrument, or authorization which such person apparently violated or with which such person apparently failed to comply; (ii) set forth the nature of the act or omission charged against such person and the facts upon which such charge is based; and (iii) state the date on which such conduct occurred. Any forfeiture penalty determined under this paragraph shall be recoverable pursuant to section 504(a) of this Act.

"(5) No forfeiture liability shall be determined under this subsection against any person, if such person does not hold a license, permit, certificate, or other authorization issued by the Commission, unless, prior to the notice required by paragraph (3) of this subsection or the notice of apparent liability required by paragraph (4) of this subsection, such person (A) is sent a citation of the violation charged; (B) is given a reasonable opportunity for a personal interview with an official of the Commission, at the field office of the Commission which is nearest to such person's place of residence; and (C) subsequently engages in conduct of the type described in such citation. The provisions of this paragraph shall not apply, however, if the person involved is engaging in activities for which a license, permit, certificate, or other authorization is required. Whenever the requirements of this paragraph are satisfied with respect to a particular person, such person shall not be entitled to receive any additional citation of the violation charged, with respect to any conduct of the type described in the citation sent under this paragraph.

Liability exemption period.

"(6) No forfeiture penalty shall be determined or imposed against any person under this subsection if—

"(A) such person holds a broadcast station license issued under title III of this Act and if the violation charged occurred—

47 USC 301.

"(i) more than 1 year prior to the date of issuance of the required notice or notice of apparent liability; or

"(ii) prior to the date of commencement of the current term of such license,

whichever is earlier so long as such violation occurred within 3 years prior to the date of issuance of such required notice; or

"(B) such person does not hold a broadcast station license issued under title III of this Act and if the violation charged occurred more than 1 year prior to the date of issuance of the required notice or notice of apparent liability.". 47 USC 301.

SEC. 3. (a) The first sentence of section 504(a) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 504(a)) is amended by inserting immediately after "recoverable" the following: ", except as otherwise provided with respect to a forfeiture penalty determined under section 503(b)(3) of this Act,". 47 USC 503.

(b) Section 504(b) of such Act is amended (1) by striking out "parts II and III of title III and section 503(b), section 507, and section 510" and inserting in lieu thereof "title II, parts II and III of title III, and sections 503(b) and 507"; and (2) by striking out ", upon application therefor,". 47 USC 351, 381, 503, 507, 510.

SEC. 4. Section 510 of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 510) is repealed in its entirety. 47 USC 201, 351, 381, 503, 507. Repeal.

SEC. 5. Section 2(b) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 152(b)) is amended by striking the word "Subject" and inserting in lieu thereof the following "Except as provided in section 224 and subject". *Infra.*

SEC. 6. Title II of the Communications Act of 1934 is amended by adding at the end thereof the following new section:

"REGULATIONS OF POLE ATTACHMENTS

"SEC. 224. (a) As used in this section: Definitions. 47 USC 224.

"(1) The term 'utility' means any person whose rates or charges are regulated by the Federal Government or a State and who owns or controls poles, ducts, conduits, or rights-of-way used, in whole or in part, for wire communication. Such term does not include any railroad, any person who is cooperatively organized, or any person owned by the Federal Government or any State.

"(2) The term 'Federal Government' means the Government of the United States or any agency or instrumentality thereof.

"(3) The term 'State' means any State, territory, or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, or any political subdivision, agency, or instrumentality thereof.

"(4) The term 'pole attachment' means any attachment by a cable television system to a pole, duct, conduit, or right-of-way owned or controlled by a utility.

"(b)(1) Subject to the provisions of subsection (c) of this section, the Commission shall regulate the rates, terms, and conditions for pole attachments to provide that such rates, terms, and conditions are just and reasonable, and shall adopt procedures necessary and appropriate to hear and resolve complaints concerning such rates, terms, and conditions. For purposes of enforcing any determinations resulting from complaint procedures established pursuant to this subsection, the Commission shall take such action as it deems appropriate and necessary, including issuing cease and desist orders, as authorized by section 312(b) of title III of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended. Enforcement. 47 USC 312.

"(2) Within 180 days from the date of enactment of this section the Commission shall prescribe by rule regulations to carry out the provisions of this section. Regulations.

"(c)(1) Nothing in this section shall be construed to apply to, or to give the Commission jurisdiction with respect to rates, terms, and conditions for pole attachments in any case where such matters are regulated by a State.

State regulation, certification.

"(2) Each State which regulates the rates, terms, and conditions for pole attachments shall certify to the Commission that—

"(A) it regulates such rates, terms, and conditions; and

"(B) in so regulating such rates, terms, and conditions, the State has the authority to consider and does consider the interests of the subscribers of cable television services, as well as the interests of the consumers of the utility services.

Just and reasonable rates.

"(d)(1) For purposes of subsection (b) of this section, a rate is just and reasonable if it assures a utility the recovery of not less than the additional costs of providing pole attachments, nor more than an amount determined by multiplying the percentage of the total usable space, or the percentage of the total duct or conduit capacity, which is occupied by the pole attachment by the sum of the operating expenses and actual capital costs of the utility attributable to the entire pole, duct, conduit, or right-of-way.

"Usable space."

"(2) As used in this subsection, the term 'usable space' means the space above the minimum grade level which can be used for the attachment of wires, cables, and associated equipment.

Expiration date.

"(e) Upon the expiration of the 5-year period that begins on the date of enactment of this Act the provisions of subsection (d) of this section shall cease to have any effect.".

Effective date.
47 USC 152 note.

SEC. 7. The amendments made by this Act shall take effect on the thirtieth day after the date of enactment of this Act; except that the provisions of sections 503(b) and 510 of the Communications Act of 1934, as in effect on such date of enactment, shall continue to constitute the applicable law with the respect to any act or omission which occurs prior to such thirtieth day.

Ante, p. 35.

Approved February 21, 1978.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

HOUSE REPORT No. 95-721 and 95-721, pt. 2 (Comm. on Interstate and Foreign Commerce).

SENATE REPORT No. 95-580 accompanying S. 1547 (Comm. on Commerce, Science, and Transportation).

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD:

Vol. 123 (1977): Oct. 25, considered and passed House.

Vol. 124 (1978): Jan. 31, considered and passed Senate, amended, in lieu of S. 1547.

Feb. 1, House concurred in Senate amendment, with amendments.

Feb. 6, Senate disagreed to House amendments Nos. 1, 2, and 3; concurred in amendment No. 4, with an amendment. House receded from amendments Nos. 1, 2, and 3; concurred in Senate amendment of No. 4.