

Pub. L. 98-549, set out as a note under section 521 of this title.

§ 552. Consumer protection and customer service

(a) Franchising authority enforcement

A franchising authority may establish and enforce—

- (1) customer service requirements of the cable operator; and
- (2) construction schedules and other construction-related requirements, including construction-related performance requirements, of the cable operator.

(b) Commission standards

The Commission shall, within 180 days of October 5, 1992, establish standards by which cable operators may fulfill their customer service requirements. Such standards shall include, at a minimum, requirements governing—

- (1) cable system office hours and telephone availability;
- (2) installations, outages, and service calls; and
- (3) communications between the cable operator and the subscriber (including standards governing bills and refunds).

(c) Subscriber notice

A cable operator may provide notice of service and rate changes to subscribers using any reasonable written means at its sole discretion. Notwithstanding section 543(b)(6) of this title or any other provision of this chapter, a cable operator shall not be required to provide prior notice of any rate change that is the result of a regulatory fee, franchise fee, or any other fee, tax, assessment, or charge of any kind imposed by any Federal agency, State, or franchising authority on the transaction between the operator and the subscriber.

(d) Consumer protection laws and customer service agreements

(1) Consumer protection laws

Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to prohibit any State or any franchising authority from enacting or enforcing any consumer protection law, to the extent not specifically preempted by this subchapter.

(2) Customer service requirement agreements

Nothing in this section shall be construed to preclude a franchising authority and a cable operator from agreeing to customer service requirements that exceed the standards established by the Commission under subsection (b). Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to prevent the establishment or enforcement of any municipal law or regulation, or any State law, concerning customer service that imposes customer service requirements that exceed the standards set by the Commission under this section, or that addresses matters not addressed by the standards set by the Commission under this section.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §632, as added Pub. L. 98-549, §2, Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2796; amended Pub. L. 102-385, §8, Oct. 5, 1992, 106 Stat. 1484; Pub. L. 104-104, title III, §301(g), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 117.)

Editorial Notes

REFERENCES IN TEXT

This chapter, referred to in subsec. (c), was in the original “this Act”, meaning act June 19, 1934, ch. 652, 48 Stat. 1064, known as the Communications Act of 1934, which is classified principally to this chapter. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see section 609 of this title and Tables.

AMENDMENTS

1996—Subsecs. (c), (d). Pub. L. 104-104 added subsec. (c) and redesignated former subsec. (c) as (d).

1992—Pub. L. 102-385 amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section read as follows:

“(a) A franchising authority may require, as part of a franchise (including a franchise renewal, subject to section 546 of this title), provisions for enforcement of—

“(1) customer service requirements of the cable operator; and

“(2) construction schedules and other construction-related requirements of the cable operator.

“(b) A franchising authority may enforce any provision, contained in any franchise, relating to requirements described in paragraph (1) or (2) of subsection (a) of this section, to the extent not inconsistent with this subchapter.

“(c) Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to prohibit any State or any franchising authority from enacting or enforcing any consumer protection law, to the extent not inconsistent with this subchapter.”

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1992 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 102-385 effective 60 days after Oct. 5, 1992, see section 28 of Pub. L. 102-385, set out as a note under section 325 of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective 60 days after Oct. 30, 1984, except where otherwise expressly provided, see section 9(a) of Pub. L. 98-549, set out as a note under section 521 of this title.

§ 553. Unauthorized reception of cable service

(a) Unauthorized interception or receipt or assistance in intercepting or receiving service; “assist in intercepting or receiving” defined

(1) No person shall intercept or receive or assist in intercepting or receiving any communications service offered over a cable system, unless specifically authorized to do so by a cable operator or as may otherwise be specifically authorized by law.

(2) For the purpose of this section, the term “assist in intercepting or receiving” shall include the manufacture or distribution of equipment intended by the manufacturer or distributor (as the case may be) for unauthorized reception of any communications service offered over a cable system in violation of subparagraph (1).

(b) Penalties for willful violation

(1) Any person who willfully violates subsection (a)(1) shall be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for not more than 6 months, or both.

(2) Any person who violates subsection (a)(1) willfully and for purposes of commercial advantage or private financial gain shall be fined not more than \$50,000 or imprisoned for not more than 2 years, or both, for the first such offense

and shall be fined not more than \$100,000 or imprisoned for not more than 5 years, or both, for any subsequent offense.

(3) For purposes of all penalties and remedies established for violations of subsection (a)(1), the prohibited activity established herein as it applies to each such device shall be deemed a separate violation.

(c) Civil action in district court; injunctions; damages; attorney's fees and costs; regulation by States or franchising authorities

(1) Any person aggrieved by any violation of subsection (a)(1) may bring a civil action in a United States district court or in any other court of competent jurisdiction.

(2) The court may—

(A) grant temporary and final injunctions on such terms as it may deem reasonable to prevent or restrain violations of subsection (a)(1);

(B) award damages as described in paragraph (3); and

(C) direct the recovery of full costs, including awarding reasonable attorneys' fees to an aggrieved party who prevails.

(3)(A) Damages awarded by any court under this section shall be computed in accordance with either of the following clauses:

(i) the party aggrieved may recover the actual damages suffered by him as a result of the violation and any profits of the violator that are attributable to the violation which are not taken into account in computing the actual damages; in determining the violator's profits, the party aggrieved shall be required to prove only the violator's gross revenue, and the violator shall be required to prove his deductible expenses and the elements of profit attributable to factors other than the violation; or

(ii) the party aggrieved may recover an award of statutory damages for all violations involved in the action, in a sum of not less than \$250 or more than \$10,000 as the court considers just.

(B) In any case in which the court finds that the violation was committed willfully and for purposes of commercial advantage or private financial gain, the court in its discretion may increase the award of damages, whether actual or statutory under subparagraph (A), by an amount of not more than \$50,000.

(C) In any case where the court finds that the violator was not aware and had no reason to believe that his acts constituted a violation of this section, the court in its discretion may reduce the award of damages to a sum of not less than \$100.

(D) Nothing in this subchapter shall prevent any State or franchising authority from enacting or enforcing laws, consistent with this section, regarding the unauthorized interception or reception of any cable service or other communications service.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §633, as added Pub. L. 98-549, §2, Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2796; amended Pub. L. 102-385, §21, Oct. 5, 1992, 106 Stat. 1498.)

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

1992—Subsec. (b)(2). Pub. L. 102-385, §21(1), substituted “\$50,000” for “\$25,000”, “2 years” for “1 year”, “\$100,000” for “\$50,000”, and “5 years” for “2 years”.
Subsec. (b)(3). Pub. L. 102-385, §21(2), added par. (3).

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EFFECTIVE DATE

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§ 554. Equal employment opportunity

(a) Entities within scope of coverage

This section shall apply to any corporation, partnership, association, joint-stock company, or trust engaged primarily in the management or operation of any cable system.

(b) Discrimination prohibited

Equal opportunity in employment shall be afforded by each entity specified in subsection (a), and no person shall be discriminated against in employment by such entity because of race, color, religion, national origin, age, or sex.

(c) Equal opportunity programs; establishment; maintenance; execution; terms

Any entity specified in subsection (a) shall establish, maintain, and execute a positive continuing program of specific practices designed to ensure equal opportunity in every aspect of its employment policies and practices. Under the terms of its program, each such entity shall—

(1) define the responsibility of each level of management to ensure a positive application and vigorous enforcement of its policy of equal opportunity, and establish a procedure to review and control managerial and supervisory performance;

(2) inform its employees and recognized employee organizations of the equal employment opportunity policy and program and enlist their cooperation;

(3) communicate its equal employment opportunity policy and program and its employment needs to sources of qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, age, or sex, and solicit their recruitment assistance on a continuing basis;

(4) conduct a continuing program to exclude every form of prejudice or discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, or sex, from its personnel policies and practices and working conditions; and

(5) conduct a continuing review of job structure and employment practices and adopt positive recruitment, training, job design, and other measures needed to ensure genuine equality of opportunity to participate fully in all its organizational units, occupations, and levels of responsibility.