

STATE OF NEW YORK

3734

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

February 7, 2023

Introduced by M. of A. PRETLOW, DICKENS, REYES, McMAHON -- read once and referred to the Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions

AN ACT to amend the public service law and the state finance law, in relation to enacting the accessible electronic information act

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Short title. This act shall be known and may be cited as
2 the "accessible electronic information act".

3 § 2. Legislative finding. The National Federation of the Blind estab-
4 lished the NFB-NEWSLINE to increase the ability of visually impaired
5 individuals to receive information provided by newspapers, magazines,
6 journals and other print media which are traditionally unavailable in a
7 limited electronic broadcast. Since 2002, this vital service has
8 provided visually impaired New Yorkers with information on job listings,
9 self-help magazines, do-it-yourself guides, political magazines, several
10 newspapers, TV guide listings, and other literary necessities that all
11 sighted New Yorkers have enjoyed. This legislation provides a stable
12 means to bring NEWSLINE to New York.

13 § 3. The public service law is amended by adding a new section 92-j to
14 read as follows:

15 § 92-j. Accessible electronic information; blind and disabled persons.
16 1. A qualified not-for-profit entity capable of providing such service
17 shall provide an accessible electronic information service for eligible
18 blind and disabled persons. This service shall be planned for continua-
19 tion from year to year and make maximum use of federal, state, private
20 and other funds available, including obtaining grant or in-kind support
21 from appropriate programs and securing access to low-cost interstate
22 rates for telecommunications by reimbursement or otherwise.

23 2. As used in this section, the following terms shall have the follow-
24 ing meanings, unless otherwise indicated:

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 (a) "Accessible electronic information service" means news and other
2 timely information (including newspapers) provided to eligible individ-
3 uals from a multi-state service center, using high-speed computers and
4 telecommunications technology for interstate acquisition of content and
5 rapid distribution in a form appropriate for use by such individuals;

6 (b) "Blind and disabled persons" means those individuals who are
7 eligible for library loan services through the Library of Congress and
8 the State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped pursuant to
9 36 CFR 701.10(b);

10 (c) "Director" means the director of the selected not-for-profit enti-
11 ty;

12 (d) "Qualified entity" means a not-for-profit entity within this state
13 capable of providing accessible electronic information services which:

14 (i) provides interstate access for eligible persons to read daily
15 newspapers producing audio editions by computer, and

16 (ii) provides a means of program administration and reader registra-
17 tion on the internet.

18 § 4. The state finance law is amended by adding a new section 99-qq to
19 read as follows:

20 § 99-qq. Accessible electronic information service fund. 1. There is
21 hereby established in the custody of the state comptroller a special
22 revenue fund to be known as the "accessible electronic information
23 service fund".

24 2. Funding for the accessible electronic information service fund
25 shall be obtained from an annual assessment, to be levied by the public
26 service commission, on companies that provide telecommunication services
27 to blind and disabled persons, as defined by paragraph (b) of subdivi-
28 sion two of section ninety-two-j of the public service law, including
29 but not limited to, certified telecommunication carriers, cable tele-
30 vision companies that offer telephone service, and other companies the
31 public service commission deems to be a provider of telecommunication
32 services, for costs and expenses incurred by qualified not-for-profit
33 entities pursuant to subdivision one of section ninety-two-j of the
34 public service law, but in no event shall such total annual assessment
35 exceed seventy-five thousand dollars.

36 3. Nothing contained in this section shall prevent the state from
37 receiving grants, gifts or bequests and depositing them into the acces-
38 sible electronic information service fund according to law.

39 4. The accessible electronic information service fund shall be admin-
40 istered by the department of public service, in consultation with the
41 commissioner of the New York state commission for the blind, in accord-
42 ance with this section.

43 § 5. This act shall take effect on the ninetieth day after it shall
44 have become a law. Effective immediately, the addition, amendment and/or
45 repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implementation of
46 this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and completed
47 on before such effective date.