

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §628, as added Pub. L. 102-385, §19, Oct. 5, 1992, 106 Stat. 1494; amended Pub. L. 104-104, title III, §301(h), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 117.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

This chapter, referred to in subsec. (e)(2), 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—Subsec. (j). Pub. L. 104-104 added subsec. (j).

EFFECTIVE DATE

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

§ 549. Competitive availability of navigation devices

(a) Commercial consumer availability of equipment used to access services provided by multichannel video programming distributors

The Commission shall, in consultation with appropriate industry standard-setting organizations, adopt regulations to assure the commercial availability, to consumers of multichannel video programming and other services offered over multichannel video programming systems, of converter boxes, interactive communications equipment, and other equipment used by consumers to access multichannel video programming and other services offered over multichannel video programming systems, from manufacturers, retailers, and other vendors not affiliated with any multichannel video programming distributor. Such regulations shall not prohibit any multichannel video programming distributor from also offering converter boxes, interactive communications equipment, and other equipment used by consumers to access multichannel video programming and other services offered over multichannel video programming systems, to consumers, if the system operator's charges to consumers for such devices and equipment are separately stated and not subsidized by charges for any such service.

(b) Protection of system security

The Commission shall not prescribe regulations under subsection (a) of this section which would jeopardize security of multichannel video programming and other services offered over multichannel video programming systems, or impede the legal rights of a provider of such services to prevent theft of service.

(c) Waiver

The Commission shall waive a regulation adopted under subsection (a) of this section for a limited time upon an appropriate showing by a provider of multichannel video programming and other services offered over multichannel video programming systems, or an equipment provider, that such waiver is necessary to assist the development or introduction of a new or improved multichannel video programming or other service offered over multichannel video

programming systems, technology, or products. Upon an appropriate showing, the Commission shall grant any such waiver request within 90 days of any application filed under this subsection, and such waiver shall be effective for all service providers and products in that category and for all providers of services and products.

(d) Avoidance of redundant regulations

(1) Commercial availability determinations

Determinations made or regulations prescribed by the Commission with respect to commercial availability to consumers of converter boxes, interactive communications equipment, and other equipment used by consumers to access multichannel video programming and other services offered over multichannel video programming systems, before February 8, 1996, shall fulfill the requirements of this section.

(2) Regulations

Nothing in this section affects section 64.702(e) of the Commission's regulations (47 C.F.R. 64.702(e)) or other Commission regulations governing interconnection and competitive provision of customer premises equipment used in connection with basic common carrier communications services.

(e) Sunset

The regulations adopted under this section shall cease to apply when the Commission determines that—

- (1) the market for the multichannel video programming distributors is fully competitive;
- (2) the market for converter boxes, and interactive communications equipment, used in conjunction with that service is fully competitive; and
- (3) elimination of the regulations would promote competition and the public interest.

(f) Commission's authority

Nothing in this section shall be construed as expanding or limiting any authority that the Commission may have under law in effect before February 8, 1996.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §629, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title III, §304, Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 125.)

PART IV—MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

§ 551. Protection of subscriber privacy

(a) Notice to subscriber regarding personally identifiable information; definitions

(1) At the time of entering into an agreement to provide any cable service or other service to a subscriber and at least once a year thereafter, a cable operator shall provide notice in the form of a separate, written statement to such subscriber which clearly and conspicuously informs the subscriber of—

(A) the nature of personally identifiable information collected or to be collected with respect to the subscriber and the nature of the use of such information;

(B) the nature, frequency, and purpose of any disclosure which may be made of such information, including an identification of the

types of persons to whom the disclosure may be made;

(C) the period during which such information will be maintained by the cable operator;

(D) the times and place at which the subscriber may have access to such information in accordance with subsection (d) of this section; and

(E) the limitations provided by this section with respect to the collection and disclosure of information by a cable operator and the right of the subscriber under subsections (f) and (h) of this section to enforce such limitations.

In the case of subscribers who have entered into such an agreement before the effective date of this section, such notice shall be provided within 180 days of such date and at least once a year thereafter.

(2) For purposes of this section, other than subsection (h) of this section—

(A) the term “personally identifiable information” does not include any record of aggregate data which does not identify particular persons;

(B) the term “other service” includes any wire or radio communications service provided using any of the facilities of a cable operator that are used in the provision of cable service; and

(C) the term “cable operator” includes, in addition to persons within the definition of cable operator in section 522 of this title, any person who (i) is owned or controlled by, or under common ownership or control with, a cable operator, and (ii) provides any wire or radio communications service.

(b) Collection of personally identifiable information using cable system

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), a cable operator shall not use the cable system to collect personally identifiable information concerning any subscriber without the prior written or electronic consent of the subscriber concerned.

(2) A cable operator may use the cable system to collect such information in order to—

(A) obtain information necessary to render a cable service or other service provided by the cable operator to the subscriber; or

(B) detect unauthorized reception of cable communications.

(c) Disclosure of personally identifiable information

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), a cable operator shall not disclose personally identifiable information concerning any subscriber without the prior written or electronic consent of the subscriber concerned and shall take such actions as are necessary to prevent unauthorized access to such information by a person other than the subscriber or cable operator.

(2) A cable operator may disclose such information if the disclosure is—

(A) necessary to render, or conduct a legitimate business activity related to, a cable service or other service provided by the cable operator to the subscriber;

(B) subject to subsection (h) of this section, made pursuant to a court order authorizing

such disclosure, if the subscriber is notified of such order by the person to whom the order is directed;

(C) a disclosure of the names and addresses of subscribers to any cable service or other service, if—

(i) the cable operator has provided the subscriber the opportunity to prohibit or limit such disclosure, and

(ii) the disclosure does not reveal, directly or indirectly, the—

(I) extent of any viewing or other use by the subscriber of a cable service or other service provided by the cable operator, or

(II) the nature of any transaction made by the subscriber over the cable system of the cable operator; or

(D) to a government entity as authorized under chapters 119, 121, or 206 of title 18, except that such disclosure shall not include records revealing cable subscriber selection of video programming from a cable operator.

(d) Subscriber access to information

A cable subscriber shall be provided access to all personally identifiable information regarding that subscriber which is collected and maintained by a cable operator. Such information shall be made available to the subscriber at reasonable times and at a convenient place designated by such cable operator. A cable subscriber shall be provided reasonable opportunity to correct any error in such information.

(e) Destruction of information

A cable operator shall destroy personally identifiable information if the information is no longer necessary for the purpose for which it was collected and there are no pending requests or orders for access to such information under subsection (d) of this section or pursuant to a court order.

(f) Civil action in United States district court; damages; attorney’s fees and costs; nonexclusive nature of remedy

(1) Any person aggrieved by any act of a cable operator in violation of this section may bring a civil action in a United States district court.

(2) The court may award—

(A) actual damages but not less than liquidated damages computed at the rate of \$100 a day for each day of violation or \$1,000, whichever is higher;

(B) punitive damages; and

(C) reasonable attorneys’ fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred.

(3) The remedy provided by this section shall be in addition to any other lawful remedy available to a cable subscriber.

(g) Regulation by States or franchising authorities

Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to prohibit any State or any franchising authority from enacting or enforcing laws consistent with this section for the protection of subscriber privacy.

(h) Disclosure of information to governmental entity pursuant to court order

Except as provided in subsection (c)(2)(D) of this section, a governmental entity may obtain

personally identifiable information concerning a cable subscriber pursuant to a court order only if, in the court proceeding relevant to such court order—

(1) such entity offers clear and convincing evidence that the subject of the information is reasonably suspected of engaging in criminal activity and that the information sought would be material evidence in the case; and

(2) the subject of the information is afforded the opportunity to appear and contest such entity's claim.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, § 631, as added Pub. L. 98-549, § 2, Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2794; amended Pub. L. 102-385, § 20, Oct. 5, 1992, 106 Stat. 1497; Pub. L. 107-56, title II, § 211, Oct. 26, 2001, 115 Stat. 283.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

For “the effective date of this section”, referred to in subsec. (a)(1), as 60 days after Oct. 30, 1984, except where otherwise expressly provided, see section 9(a) of Pub. L. 98-549, set out as an Effective Date note under section 521 of this title.

AMENDMENTS

2001—Subsec. (c)(2)(D). Pub. L. 107-56, § 211(1), added subpar. (D).

Subsec. (h). Pub. L. 107-56, § 211(2), substituted “Except as provided in subsection (c)(2)(D) of this section, a governmental entity” for “A governmental entity” in introductory provisions.

1992—Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 102-385, § 20(a), amended par. (2) generally. Prior to amendment, par. (2) read as follows: “For purposes of this section, the term ‘personally identifiable information’ does not include any record of aggregate data which does not identify particular persons.”

Subsec. (c)(1). Pub. L. 102-385, § 20(b), inserted before period at end “and shall take such actions as are necessary to prevent unauthorized access to such information by a person other than the subscriber or cable operator”.

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.

§ 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) of this section. 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.)

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 require-

ments 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.”

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) of this section 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) of this section 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) of this section, 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) of this section 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) of this section;

(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.)

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).

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.

§ 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) of this section, and no person shall be discrimi-

nated 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) of this section 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.

(d) Revision of rules; required provisions; annual statistical report; notice and comment on amendments

(1) Not later than 270 days after the date of enactment of the Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992, and after notice and opportunity for hearing, the Commission shall prescribe revisions in the rules under this section in order to implement the amendments made to this section by such Act. Such revisions shall be designed to promote equality of employment opportunities for females and minorities in each of the job categories itemized in paragraph (3).

(2) Such rules shall specify the terms under which an entity specified in subsection (a) of this section shall, to the extent possible—

(A) disseminate its equal opportunity program to job applicants, employees, and those with whom it regularly does business;

(B) use minority organizations, organizations for women, media, educational institutions, and other potential sources of minority and female applicants, to supply referrals whenever jobs are available in its operation;

(C) evaluate its employment profile and job turnover against the availability of minorities and women in its franchise area;

(D) undertake to offer promotions of minorities and women to positions of greater responsibility;

(E) encourage minority and female entrepreneurs to conduct business with all parts of its operation; and

(F) analyze the results of its efforts to recruit, hire, promote, and use the services of minorities and women and explain any difficulties encountered in implementing its equal employment opportunity program.

(3)(A) Such rules also shall require an entity specified in subsection (a) of this section with more than 5 full-time employees to file with the Commission an annual statistical report identifying by race, sex, and job title the number of employees in each of the following full-time and part-time job categories:

(i) Corporate officers.

(ii) General Manager.

(iii) Chief Technician.

(iv) Comptroller.

(v) General Sales Manager.

(vi) Production Manager.

(vii) Managers.

(viii) Professionals.

(ix) Technicians.

(x) Sales Personnel.

(xi) Office and Clerical Personnel.

(xii) Skilled Craftspersons.

(xiii) Semiskilled Operatives.

(xiv) Unskilled Laborers.

(xv) Service Workers.

(B) The report required by subparagraph (A) shall be made on separate forms, provided by the Commission, for full-time and part-time employees. The Commission's rules shall sufficiently define the job categories listed in clauses (i) through (vi) of such subparagraph so as to ensure that only employees who are principal decisionmakers and who have supervisory authority are reported for such categories. The Commission shall adopt rules that define the job categories listed in clauses (vii) through (xv) in a manner that is consistent with the Commission policies in effect on June 1, 1990. The Commission shall prescribe the method by which entities shall be required to compute and report the number of minorities and women in the job categories listed in clauses (i) through (x) and the number of minorities and women in the job categories listed in clauses (i) through (xv) in proportion to the total number of qualified minorities and women in the relevant labor market. The report shall include information on hiring, promotion, and recruitment practices necessary for the Commission to evaluate the efforts of entities to comply with the provisions of paragraph (2) of this subsection. The report shall be available for public inspection at the entity's central location and at every location where 5 or more full-time employees are regularly assigned to work. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as prohibiting the Commission from collecting or continuing to collect statistical or other employment information in a manner that it deems appropriate to carry out this section.

(4) The Commission may amend such rules from time to time to the extent necessary to carry out the provisions of this section. Any such amendment shall be made after notice and opportunity for comment.

(e) Annual certification of compliance; periodic investigation of employment practices

(1) On an annual basis, the Commission shall certify each entity described in subsection (a) of this section as in compliance with this section if, on the basis of information in the possession of the Commission, including the report filed pursuant to subsection (d)(3) of this section, such entity was in compliance, during the annual period involved, with the requirements of subsections (b), (c), and (d) of this section.

(2) The Commission shall, periodically but not less frequently than every five years, investigate the employment practices of each entity described in subsection (a) of this section, in the aggregate, as well as in individual job categories, and determine whether such entity is in compliance with the requirements of subsections (b), (c), and (d) of this section, including whether such entity's employment practices deny or abridge women and minorities equal employment opportunities. As part of such investigation, the Commission shall review whether the entity's reports filed pursuant to subsection (d)(3) of this section accurately reflect employee responsibilities in the reported job classifications.

(f) Substantial failure to comply; penalties; notice to public and franchising authorities

(1) If the Commission finds after notice and hearing that the entity involved has willfully or repeatedly without good cause failed to comply with the requirements of this section, such failure shall constitute a substantial failure to comply with this subchapter. The failure to obtain certification under subsection (e) of this section shall not itself constitute the basis for a determination of substantial failure to comply with this title. For purposes of this paragraph, the term "repeatedly", when used with respect to failures to comply, refers to 3 or more failures during any 7-year period.

(2) Any person who is determined by the Commission, through an investigation pursuant to subsection (e) of this section or otherwise, to have failed to meet or failed to make best efforts to meet the requirements of this section, or rules under this section, shall be liable to the United States for a forfeiture penalty of \$500 for each violation. Each day of a continuing violation shall constitute a separate offense. Any entity defined in subsection (a) of this section shall not be liable for more than 180 days of forfeitures which accrued prior to notification by the Commission of a potential violation. Nothing in this paragraph shall limit the forfeiture imposed on any person as a result of any violation that continues subsequent to such notification. In addition, any person liable for such penalty may also have any license under this chapter for cable auxiliary relay service suspended until the Commission determines that the failure involved has been corrected. Whoever knowingly makes any false statement or submits documentation which he knows to be false, pursuant to an application for certification under this section shall be in violation of this section.

(3) The provisions of paragraphs (3) and (4), and the last 2 sentences of paragraph (2), of section 503(b) of this title shall apply to forfeitures under this subsection.

(4) The Commission shall provide for notice to the public and appropriate franchising authorities of any penalty imposed under this section.

(g) Discrimination complaints; investigation; enforcement

Employees or applicants for employment who believe they have been discriminated against in violation of the requirements of this section, or rules under this section, or any other interested person, may file a complaint with the Commission. A complaint by any such person shall be in writing, and shall be signed and sworn to by that person. The regulations under subsection (d)(1) of this section shall specify a program, under authorities otherwise available to the Commission, for the investigation of complaints and violations, and for the enforcement of this section.

(h) "Cable operator" defined; owners of multiple unit dwellings

(1) For purposes of this section, the term "cable operator" includes any operator of any satellite master antenna television system, including a system described in section 522(7)(A) of this title and any multichannel video programming distributor.

(2) Such term does not include any operator of a system which, in the aggregate, serves fewer than 50 subscribers.

(3) In any case in which a cable operator is the owner of a multiple unit dwelling, the requirements of this section shall only apply to such cable operator with respect to its employees who are primarily engaged in cable telecommunications.

(i) Regulatory powers of States and franchising authorities; nonexclusive nature of remedies and enforcement provisions; covered franchises

(1) Nothing in this section shall affect the authority of any State or any franchising authority—

(A) to establish or enforce any requirement which is consistent with the requirements of this section, including any requirement which affords equal employment opportunity protection for employees;

(B) to establish or enforce any provision requiring or encouraging any cable operator to conduct business with enterprises which are owned or controlled by members of minority groups (as defined in section 309(i)(3)(C)(ii) of this title) or which have their principal operations located within the community served by the cable operator; or

(C) to enforce any requirement of a franchise in effect on the effective date of this subchapter.

(2) The remedies and enforcement provisions of this section are in addition to, and not in lieu of, those available under this or any other law.

(3) The provisions of this section shall apply to any cable operator, whether operating pursuant to a franchise granted before, on, or after October 30, 1984.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §634, as added Pub. L. 98-549, §2, Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2797; amended Pub. L. 102-385, §22(b)-(e), Oct. 5, 1992,

106 Stat. 1498, 1499; Pub. L. 103-414, title III, § 303(a)(24), Oct. 25, 1994, 108 Stat. 4295.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992, referred to in subsec. (d)(1), is Pub. L. 102-385, Oct. 5, 1992, 106 Stat. 1460. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title of 1992 Amendments note set out under section 609 of this title and Tables.

This chapter, referred to in subsec. (f)(2), 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.

For “the effective date of this subchapter”, referred to in subsec. (i)(1)(C), as 60 days after Oct. 30, 1984, except where otherwise expressly provided, see section 9(a) of Pub. L. 98-549, set out as an Effective Date note under section 521 of this title.

AMENDMENTS

1994—Subsec. (h)(1). Pub. L. 103-414 substituted “section 522(7)(A)” for “section 522(6)(A)”.

1992—Subsec. (d)(1). Pub. L. 102-385, § 22(b), amended par. (1) generally. Prior to amendment, par. (1) read as follows: “Not later than 270 days after the effective date of this section, and after notice and opportunity for hearing, the Commission shall prescribe rules to carry out this section.”

Subsec. (d)(3). Pub. L. 102-385, § 22(c), amended par. (3) generally. Prior to amendment, par. (3) read as follows: “Such rules also shall require an entity specified in subsection (a) of this section with more than 5 full-time employees to file with the Commission an annual statistical report identifying by race and sex the number of employees in each of the following full-time and part-time job categories:

- “(A) officials and managers;
- “(B) professionals;
- “(C) technicians;
- “(D) sales persons;
- “(E) office and clerical personnel;
- “(F) skilled craft persons;
- “(G) semiskilled operatives;
- “(H) unskilled laborers; and
- “(I) service workers.

The report shall include the number of minorities and women in the relevant labor market for each of the above categories. The statistical report shall be available to the public at the central office and at every location where more than 5 full-time employees are regularly assigned to work.”

Subsec. (f)(2). Pub. L. 102-385, § 22(d), substituted “\$500” for “\$200”.

Subsec. (h)(1). Pub. L. 102-385, § 22(e), inserted before period at end “and any multichannel video programming distributor”.

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.

CONGRESSIONAL FINDINGS: EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Section 22(a) of Pub. L. 102-385 provided that: “The Congress finds and declares that—

- “(1) despite the existence of regulations governing equal employment opportunity, females and minori-

ties are not employed in significant numbers in positions of management authority in the cable and broadcast television industries;

“(2) increased numbers of females and minorities in positions of management authority in the cable and broadcast television industries advances the Nation’s policy favoring diversity in the expression of views in the electronic media; and

“(3) rigorous enforcement of equal employment opportunity rules and regulations is required in order to effectively deter racial and gender discrimination.”

STUDY AND REPORT ON EFFECT AND OPERATION OF AMENDMENTS BY SECTION 22 OF PUB. L. 102-385

Section 22(g) of Pub. L. 102-385 provided that: “Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act [Oct. 5, 1992], the Commission shall submit to the Congress a report pursuant to a proceeding to review and obtain public comment on the effect and operation of the amendments made by this section [enacting section 334 of this title and amending this section]. In conducting such review, the Commission shall consider the effectiveness of its procedures, regulations, policies, standards, and guidelines in promoting equality of employment opportunity and promotion opportunity, and particularly the effectiveness of its procedures, regulations, policies, standards, and guidelines in promoting the congressional policy favoring increased employment opportunity for women and minorities in positions of management authority. The Commission shall forward to the Congress such legislative recommendations to improve equal employment opportunity in the broadcasting and cable industries as it deems necessary.”

§ 555. Judicial proceedings

(a) Actions to review determinations by franchising authorities

Any cable operator adversely affected by any final determination made by a franchising authority under section 541(a)(1), 545 or 546 of this title may commence an action within 120 days after receiving notice of such determination, which may be brought in—

(1) the district court of the United States for any judicial district in which the cable system is located; or

(2) in any State court of general jurisdiction having jurisdiction over the parties.

(b) Available relief

The court may award any appropriate relief consistent with the provisions of the relevant section described in subsection (a) of this section and with the provisions of subsection (a) of this section.

(c) Review of constitutionality of sections 534 and 535

(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any civil action challenging the constitutionality of section 534 or 535 of this title or any provision thereof shall be heard by a district court of three judges convened pursuant to the provisions of section 2284 of title 28.

(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an interlocutory or final judgment, decree, or order of the court of three judges in an action under paragraph (1) holding section 534 or 535 of this title or any provision thereof unconstitutional shall be reviewable as a matter of right by direct appeal to the Supreme Court. Any such appeal shall be filed not more than 20 days after entry of such judgment, decree, or order.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §635, as added Pub. L. 98-549, §2, Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2800; amended Pub. L. 102-385, §§7(a)(2), 23, 24(b), Oct. 5, 1992, 106 Stat. 1483, 1500, 1501.)

AMENDMENTS

1992—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 102-385, §7(a)(2), inserted “541(a)(1),” after “section”.

Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 102-385, §24(b), inserted “and with the provisions of subsection (a) of this section” after “subsection (a) of this section”.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 102-385, §23, added subsec. (c).

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.

§ 555a. Limitation of franchising authority liability

(a) Suits for damages prohibited

In any court proceeding pending on or initiated after October 5, 1992, involving any claim against a franchising authority or other governmental entity, or any official, member, employee, or agent of such authority or entity, arising from the regulation of cable service or from a decision of approval or disapproval with respect to a grant, renewal, transfer, or amendment of a franchise, any relief, to the extent such relief is required by any other provision of Federal, State, or local law, shall be limited to injunctive relief and declaratory relief.

(b) Exception for completed cases

The limitation contained in subsection (a) of this section shall not apply to actions that, prior to such violation, have been determined by a final order of a court of binding jurisdiction, no longer subject to appeal, to be in violation of a cable operator's rights.

(c) Discrimination claims permitted

Nothing in this section shall be construed as limiting the relief authorized with respect to any claim against a franchising authority or other governmental entity, or any official, member, employee, or agent of such authority or entity, to the extent such claim involves discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, or handicap.

(d) Rule of construction

Nothing in this section shall be construed as creating or authorizing liability of any kind, under any law, for any action or failure to act relating to cable service or the granting of a franchise by any franchising authority or other governmental entity, or any official, member, employee, or agent of such authority or entity.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §635A, as added Pub. L. 102-385, §24(a), Oct. 5, 1992, 106 Stat. 1500.)

EFFECTIVE DATE

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

§ 556. Coordination of Federal, State, and local authority

(a) Regulation by States, political subdivisions, State and local agencies, and franchising authorities

Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to affect any authority of any State, political subdivision, or agency thereof, or franchising authority, regarding matters of public health, safety, and welfare, to the extent consistent with the express provisions of this subchapter.

(b) State jurisdiction with regard to cable services

Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to restrict a State from exercising jurisdiction with regard to cable services consistent with this subchapter.

(c) Preemption

Except as provided in section 557 of this title, any provision of law of any State, political subdivision, or agency thereof, or franchising authority, or any provision of any franchise granted by such authority, which is inconsistent with this chapter shall be deemed to be preempted and superseded.

(d) “State” defined

For purposes of this section, the term “State” has the meaning given such term in section 153 of this title.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §636, as added Pub. L. 98-549, §2, Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2800; amended Pub. L. 104-104, §3(d)(3), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 61.)

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—Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 104-104 substituted “section 153” for “section 153(v)”.

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.

§ 557. Existing franchises

(a) The provisions of—

(1) any franchise in effect on the effective date of this subchapter, including any such provisions which relate to the designation, use, or support for the use of channel capacity for public, educational, or governmental use, and

(2) any law of any State (as defined in section 153 of this title) in effect on October 30, 1984, or any regulation promulgated pursuant to such law, which relates to such designation, use or support of such channel capacity,

shall remain in effect, subject to the express provisions of this subchapter, and for not longer than the then current remaining term of the

franchise as such franchise existed on such effective date.

(b) For purposes of subsection (a) of this section and other provisions of this subchapter, a franchise shall be considered in effect on the effective date of this subchapter if such franchise was granted on or before such effective date.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §637, as added Pub. L. 98-549, §2, Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2800; amended Pub. L. 104-104, §3(d)(3), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 61.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

For “the effective date of this subchapter” and “such effective date”, referred to in subssecs. (a) and (b), as 60 days after Oct. 30, 1984, except where otherwise expressly provided, see section 9(a) of Pub. L. 98-549, set out as an Effective Date note under section 521 of this title.

AMENDMENTS

1996—Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 104-104 substituted “section 153” for “section 153(v)”.

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.

§ 558. Criminal and civil liability

Nothing in this subchapter shall be deemed to affect the criminal or civil liability of cable programmers or cable operators pursuant to the Federal, State, or local law of libel, slander, obscenity, incitement, invasions of privacy, false or misleading advertising, or other similar laws, except that cable operators shall not incur any such liability for any program carried on any channel designated for public, educational, governmental use or on any other channel obtained under section 532 of this title or under similar arrangements unless the program involves obscene material.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §638, as added Pub. L. 98-549, §2, Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2801; amended Pub. L. 102-385, §10(d), Oct. 5, 1992, 106 Stat. 1486.)

AMENDMENTS

1992—Pub. L. 102-385 inserted before period at end “unless the program involves obscene material”.

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.

§ 559. Obscene programming

Whoever transmits over any cable system any matter which is obscene or otherwise unprotected by the Constitution of the United States shall be fined under title 18 or imprisoned not more than 2 years, or both.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §639, as added Pub. L. 98-549, §2, Oct. 30, 1984, 98 Stat. 2801;

amended Pub. L. 104-104, title V, §503, Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 136.)

AMENDMENTS

1996—Pub. L. 104-104 substituted “under title 18” for “not more than \$10,000”.

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.

§ 560. Scrambling of cable channels for non-subscribers

(a) Subscriber request

Upon request by a cable service subscriber, a cable operator shall, without charge, fully scramble or otherwise fully block the audio and video programming of each channel carrying such programming so that one not a subscriber does not receive it.

(b) “Scramble” defined

As used in this section, the term “scramble” means to rearrange the content of the signal of the programming so that the programming cannot be viewed or heard in an understandable manner.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §640, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title V, §504, Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 136.)

§ 561. Scrambling of sexually explicit adult video service programming

(a) Requirement

In providing sexually explicit adult programming or other programming that is indecent on any channel of its service primarily dedicated to sexually-oriented programming, a multichannel video programming distributor shall fully scramble or otherwise fully block the video and audio portion of such channel so that one not a subscriber to such channel or programming does not receive it.

(b) Implementation

Until a multichannel video programming distributor complies with the requirement set forth in subsection (a) of this section, the distributor shall limit the access of children to the programming referred to in that subsection by not providing such programming during the hours of the day (as determined by the Commission) when a significant number of children are likely to view it.

(c) “Scramble” defined

As used in this section, the term “scramble” means to rearrange the content of the signal of the programming so that the programming cannot be viewed or heard in an understandable manner.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §641, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title V, §505(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 136.)

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section 505(b) of Pub. L. 104-104 provided that: “The amendment made by subsection (a) [enacting this section] shall take effect 30 days after the date of enactment of this Act [Feb. 8, 1996].”

PART V—VIDEO PROGRAMMING SERVICES
PROVIDED BY TELEPHONE COMPANIES

§ 571. Regulatory treatment of video programming services

(a) Limitations on cable regulation

(1) Radio-based systems

To the extent that a common carrier (or any other person) is providing video programming to subscribers using radio communication, such carrier (or other person) shall be subject to the requirements of subchapter III of this chapter and section 572 of this title, but shall not otherwise be subject to the requirements of this subchapter.

(2) Common carriage of video traffic

To the extent that a common carrier is providing transmission of video programming on a common carrier basis, such carrier shall be subject to the requirements of subchapter II of this chapter and section 572 of this title, but shall not otherwise be subject to the requirements of this subchapter. This paragraph shall not affect the treatment under section 522(7)(C) of this title of a facility of a common carrier as a cable system.

(3) Cable systems and open video systems

To the extent that a common carrier is providing video programming to its subscribers in any manner other than that described in paragraphs (1) and (2)—

(A) such carrier shall be subject to the requirements of this subchapter, unless such programming is provided by means of an open video system for which the Commission has approved a certification under section 573 of this title; or

(B) if such programming is provided by means of an open video system for which the Commission has approved a certification under section 573 of this title, such carrier shall be subject to the requirements of this part, but shall be subject to parts I through IV of this subchapter only as provided in 573(c) of this title.

(4) Election to operate as open video system

A common carrier that is providing video programming in a manner described in paragraph (1) or (2), or a combination thereof, may elect to provide such programming by means of an open video system that complies with section 573 of this title. If the Commission approves such carrier's certification under section 573 of this title, such carrier shall be subject to the requirements of this part, but shall be subject to parts I through IV of this subchapter only as provided in 573(c) of this title.

(b) Limitations on interconnection obligations

A local exchange carrier that provides cable service through an open video system or a cable system shall not be required, pursuant to subchapter II of this chapter, to make capacity available on a nondiscriminatory basis to any other person for the provision of cable service directly to subscribers.

(c) Additional regulatory relief

A common carrier shall not be required to obtain a certificate under section 214 of this title

with respect to the establishment or operation of a system for the delivery of video programming.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, §651, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title III, §302(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 118.)

§ 572. Prohibition on buy outs

(a) Acquisitions by carriers

No local exchange carrier or any affiliate of such carrier owned by, operated by, controlled by, or under common control with such carrier may purchase or otherwise acquire directly or indirectly more than a 10 percent financial interest, or any management interest, in any cable operator providing cable service within the local exchange carrier's telephone service area.

(b) Acquisitions by cable operators

No cable operator or affiliate of a cable operator that is owned by, operated by, controlled by, or under common ownership with such cable operator may purchase or otherwise acquire, directly or indirectly, more than a 10 percent financial interest, or any management interest, in any local exchange carrier providing telephone exchange service within such cable operator's franchise area.

(c) Joint ventures

A local exchange carrier and a cable operator whose telephone service area and cable franchise area, respectively, are in the same market may not enter into any joint venture or partnership to provide video programming directly to subscribers or to provide telecommunications services within such market.

(d) Exceptions

(1) Rural systems

Notwithstanding subsections (a), (b), and (c) of this section, a local exchange carrier (with respect to a cable system located in its telephone service area) and a cable operator (with respect to the facilities of a local exchange carrier used to provide telephone exchange service in its cable franchise area) may obtain a controlling interest in, management interest in, or enter into a joint venture or partnership with the operator of such system or facilities for the use of such system or facilities to the extent that—

(A) such system or facilities only serve incorporated or unincorporated—

(i) places or territories that have fewer than 35,000 inhabitants; and

(ii) are outside an urbanized area, as defined by the Bureau of the Census; and

(B) in the case of a local exchange carrier, such system, in the aggregate with any other system in which such carrier has an interest, serves less than 10 percent of the households in the telephone service area of such carrier.

(2) Joint use

Notwithstanding subsection (c) of this section, a local exchange carrier may obtain, with the concurrence of the cable operator on