

TITLE 47—TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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CHAPTER 1—TELEGRAPHS

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11.	Powers of Federal Communications Commission.
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13.	Violations; punishment; action for damages.
14.	Contracts filed with Federal Communications Commission; reports; failure to make.
15.	Reservation of power to alter, amend, or repeal act; power to fix rates and purchase lines.
16.	Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System; money transfers; portion of receipts withheld.
17.	Repealed.

§§ 1 to 6. Repealed. July 16, 1947, ch. 256, § 1, 61 Stat. 327

Section 1, R.S. § 5263, related to use of public domain.
Section 2, R.S. § 5264, related to use of materials from public lands.

Section 3, R.S. § 5266; acts June 19, 1934, ch. 652, § 601, 48 Stat. 1101; Mar. 6, 1943, ch. 10, § 6, 57 Stat. 12, related to Government priority in transmission of messages.

Section 4, R.S. § 5267; act June 19, 1934, ch. 652, § 601, 48 Stat. 1101, related to purchase of lines.

Section 5, R.S. § 5268; act June 19, 1934, ch. 652, § 601, 48 Stat. 1101, related to acceptance of obligations to be filed.

Section 6, R.S. § 5265; act June 19, 1934, ch. 652, § 601, 48 Stat. 1101, provided that rights were not transferable.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF REPEAL

Section 3 of act July 16, 1947, provided that: "This Act [repealing sections 1 to 6 and 8 of this title] shall

AUTHORITY OF FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION; EFFECT OF REPEAL

Section 2 of act July 16, 1947, provided that: "Nothing in this Act [repealing sections 1 to 6 and 8 of this title] shall limit the authority of the Federal Communications Commission under the provisions of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended [chapter 5 of this title], to prescribe charges, classifications, regulations, and practices, including priorities, applicable to Government communications."

§ 7. Omitted

CODIFICATION

Section, act June 23, 1879, ch. 35, § 1, 21 Stat. 31, was dependent upon and incorporated by reference in sections 1 to 6 and 8 of this title which were repealed by act July 16, 1947, ch. 256, § 1, 61 Stat. 327.

§ 8. Repealed. July 16, 1947, ch. 256, § 1, 61 Stat. 327

Section, R.S. § 5269; acts Feb. 27, 1877, ch. 69, § 1, 19 Stat. 252; June 19, 1934, ch. 652, § 601, 48 Stat. 1101, related to refusal to transmit dispatches.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF REPEAL

Repeal effective on tenth day following July 16, 1947, see section 3 of act July 16, 1947, set out as a note under sections 1 to 6 of this title.

AUTHORITY OF FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION; EFFECT OF REPEAL

See note set out under section 1 of this title.

§ 9. Subsidized companies required to construct and operate lines

All railroad and telegraph companies to which the United States has granted any subsidy in lands or bonds or loan of credit for the construction of either railroad or telegraph lines, which, by the acts incorporating them, or by any act amendatory or supplementary thereto, are required to construct, maintain, or operate telegraph lines, and all companies engaged in operating said railroad or telegraph lines shall, by and through their own respective corporate officers and employees, maintain, and operate, for railroad, governmental, commercial, and all other purposes, telegraph lines, and exercise by themselves alone all the telegraph franchises conferred upon them and obligations assumed by them under the acts making the grants as aforesaid.

(Aug. 7, 1888, ch. 772, § 1, 25 Stat. 382.)

§ 10. Equal facilities to connecting lines; discrimination in rates

Whenever any telegraph company which shall have accepted the provisions of sections 1 to 6 and 8¹ of this title, prior to the effective date of the repeal of such sections, shall extend its line to any station or office of a telegraph line belonging to any one of said railroad or telegraph companies, referred to in section 9 of this title, said telegraph company so extending its line shall have the right and said railroad or telegraph company shall allow the line of said telegraph company so extending its line to connect with the telegraph line of said railroad or telegraph company to which it is extended at the place where their lines may meet, for the prompt and convenient interchange of telegraph business between said companies; and such railroad and telegraph companies, referred to in section 9 of this title, shall so operate their respective telegraph lines as to afford equal facilities to all, without discrimination in favor of or against any person, company, or corporation whatever, and shall receive, deliver, and exchange business with connecting telegraph lines on equal terms, and affording equal facilities, and without discrimination for or against any one of such connecting lines; and such exchange of business shall be on terms just and equitable. (Aug. 7, 1888, ch. 772, § 2, 25 Stat. 383; Sept. 3, 1954, ch. 1263, § 48, 68 Stat. 1243.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

Sections 1 to 6 and 8 of this title, referred to in text, were repealed by act July 16, 1947, ch. 256, § 1, 61 Stat. 327.

AMENDMENTS

1954—Act Sept. 3, 1954, amended section to make it clear that the rights and obligations of companies which accepted benefits under former sections 1 to 6 and 8 of this title, which have been repealed, continue irrespective of the repeal.

§ 11. Powers of Federal Communications Commission

If any railroad or telegraph company referred to in section 9 of this title, or company operating such railroad or telegraph line shall refuse or fail, in whole or in part, to maintain, and operate a telegraph line as provided herein, for the use of the Government or the public, for commercial and other purposes, without discrimination, or shall refuse or fail to make or continue such arrangements for the interchange of business with any connecting telegraph company, then any person, company, corporation, or connecting telegraph company may apply for relief to the Federal Communications Commission, whose duty it shall thereupon be, under such rules and regulations as said commission may prescribe, to ascertain the facts, and determine and order what arrangement is proper to be made in the particular case, and the railroad or telegraph company concerned shall abide by and perform such order; and it shall be the duty of the Federal Communications Commission, when such determination and order are made, to no-

tify the parties concerned, and, if necessary, enforce the same by writ of mandamus in the courts of the United States, in the name of the United States, at the relation of either of said communication commissioners. The commissioners may institute any inquiry, upon their own motion, in the same manner and to the same effect as though complaint had been made.

(Aug. 7, 1888, ch. 772, § 3, 25 Stat. 383; June 19, 1934, ch. 652, § 601, 48 Stat. 1101.)

TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

Duties, powers, and functions under this section relating to operation of telegraph lines by railroad and telegraph lines granted Government aid in construction of their lines imposed on and vested in Federal Communications Commission by act June 19, 1934. See section 601 of this title.

§ 12. Interference with liens of United States

In order to secure and preserve to the United States the full value and benefit of its liens upon all the telegraph lines required to be constructed by and lawfully belonging to railroad and telegraph companies referred to in section 9 of this title, and to have the same possessed, used, and operated in conformity with sections 9 to 15 of this title, it is made the duty of the Attorney General of the United States, by proper proceedings, to prevent any unlawful interference with the rights and equities of the United States under all acts of Congress relating to such railroads and telegraph lines, and to have legally ascertained and finally adjudicated all alleged rights of all persons and corporations whatever claiming in any manner any control or interest of any kind in any telegraph lines or property, or exclusive rights-of-way upon the lands of said railroad companies, or any of them, and to have all contracts and provisions of contracts set aside and annulled which have been unlawfully and beyond their powers entered into by said railroad or telegraph companies, or any of them, with any other person, company, or corporation.

(Aug. 7, 1888, ch. 772, § 4, 25 Stat. 383.)

§ 13. Violations; punishment; action for damages

Any officer or agent of said railroad or telegraph companies, or of any company operating the railroads and telegraph lines of said companies, who shall refuse or fail to operate the telegraph lines of said railroad or telegraph companies under his control, or which he is engaged in operating, in the manner herein directed, or who shall refuse or fail, in such operation and use, to afford and secure to the Government and the public equal facilities, or to secure to each of said connecting telegraph lines equal advantages and facilities in the interchange of business, as herein provided for, without any discrimination whatever for or adverse to the telegraph line of any or either of said connecting companies, or shall refuse to abide by or perform and carry out within a reasonable time the order or orders of the Federal Communications Commission, shall in every such case of refusal or failure be guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction thereof, shall in every such case be fined in a sum of not exceeding \$1,000, and may

¹ See References in Text note below.

be imprisoned not less than six months; and in every such case of refusal or failure the party aggrieved may not only cause the officer or agent guilty thereof to be prosecuted under the provisions of this section, but may also bring an action for the damages sustained thereby against the company whose officer or agent may be guilty thereof, in the district court of the United States in any State or Territory in which any portion of the road or telegraph line of said company may be situated; and in case of suit process may be served upon any agent of the company found in such State or Territory, and such service shall be held by the court good and sufficient.

(Aug. 7, 1888, ch. 772, § 5, 25 Stat. 384; Mar. 3, 1911, ch. 231, § 289, 36 Stat. 1167; June 19, 1934, ch. 652, § 601, 48 Stat. 1101.)

CODIFICATION

Words "circuit or" which preceded "district court" were omitted in view of the abolition of the circuit courts and the transfer of their jurisdiction to the district courts by act Mar. 3, 1911.

TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

Duties, powers, and functions under this section relating to operation of telegraph lines by railroad and telegraph lines granted Government aid in construction of their lines imposed on and vested in Federal Communications Commission by act June 19, 1934. See section 601 of this title.

§ 14. Contracts filed with Federal Communications Commission; reports; failure to make

It shall be the duty of each and every one of the aforesaid railroad and telegraph companies annually to report to the Federal Communications Commission, with reasonable fullness and certainty, the nature, extent, value, and condition of the telegraph lines and property then belonging to it, the gross earnings, and all expenses of maintenance, use, and operation thereof, and its relation and business with all connecting telegraph companies during the preceding year, at such time and in such manner as may be required by a system of reports which said commission shall prescribe; and if any of said railroad or telegraph companies shall refuse or fail to make such reports or any report as may be called for by said commission, or refuse to submit its books and records for inspection, such neglect or refusal shall operate as a forfeiture, in each case of such neglect or refusal, of a sum not less than \$1,000 nor more than \$5,000, to be recovered by the Attorney General of the United States, in the name and for the use and benefit of the United States; and it shall be the duty of the Federal Communications Commission to inform the Attorney General of all such cases of neglect or refusal, whose duty it shall be to proceed at once to judicially enforce the forfeitures herein before provided.

(Aug. 7, 1888, ch. 772, § 6, 25 Stat. 384; June 19, 1934, ch. 652, § 601, 48 Stat. 1101.)

CODIFICATION

A provision in the original enactment of this section requiring filing of copies of contracts, agreements, etc., within 60 days from passage of act Aug. 7, 1888 was omitted.

TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

Duties, powers, and functions under this section relating to operation of telegraph lines by railroad and telegraph lines granted Government aid in construction of their lines imposed on and vested in Federal Communications Commission by act June 19, 1934. See section 601 of this title.

§ 15. Reservation of power to alter, amend, or repeal act; power to fix rates and purchase lines

Nothing in sections 9 to 15 of this title shall be construed to affect or impair the right of Congress, at any time hereafter, to alter, amend, or repeal sections 1 to 6 and 8¹ of this title; and sections 9 to 15 of this title shall be subject to alteration, amendment, or repeal as, in the opinion of Congress, justice or the public welfare may require; and nothing herein contained shall be held to deny, exclude, or impair any right or remedy in the premises now or hereafter existing in the United States, or the authority of the Federal Communications Commission under the provisions of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended [47 U.S.C. 151 et seq.], to prescribe charges, classifications, regulations, and practices, including priorities, applicable to Government communications.

(Aug. 7, 1888, ch. 772, § 7, 25 Stat. 385; Sept. 3, 1954, ch. 1263, § 49, 68 Stat. 1244.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

Sections 1 to 6 and 8 of this title, referred to in text, were repealed by act July 16, 1947, ch. 256, § 1, 61 Stat. 327.

The Communications Act of 1934, as amended, referred to in text, is act June 19, 1934, ch. 652, 48 Stat. 1064, as amended, which is classified principally to chapter 5 (§151 et seq.) of this title. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see section 609 of this title and Tables.

AMENDMENTS

1954—Act Sept. 3, 1954, corrected references and struck out obsolete material.

§ 16. Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System; money transfers; portion of receipts withheld

On and after May 20, 1926, such amount of money as may be authorized by the Secretary of the Army may be withheld temporarily from the receipts of the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System by the auditor of said system as a working balance from which to make payments of money transfers from and to Alaska and between points within Alaska, to be accounted for accordingly.

(May 20, 1926, ch. 345, 44 Stat. 576; July 26, 1947, ch. 343, title II, §205(a), 61 Stat. 501; Pub. L. 92-310, title III, §233, June 6, 1972, 86 Stat. 214.)

AMENDMENTS

1972—Pub. L. 92-310 struck out provisions which permitted the expenses of procuring necessary official bonds of certain enlisted men to be paid from the receipts of the system.

CHANGE OF NAME

Department of War designated Department of the Army and title of Secretary of War changed to Sec-

¹ See References in Text note below.

retary of the Army by section 205(a) of act July 26, 1947, ch. 343, title II, 61 Stat. 501. Section 205(a) of act July 26, 1947, was repealed by section 53 of act Aug. 10, 1956, ch. 1041, 70A Stat. 641. Section 1 of act Aug. 10, 1956, enacted Title 10, Armed Forces, which in sections 3010 to 3013 continued Department of the Army under administrative supervision of Secretary of the Army.

§ 17. Repealed. Pub. L. 105-119, title VI, § 620, Nov. 26, 1997, 111 Stat. 2519

Section, act May 26, 1900, ch. 586, 31 Stat. 206, related to prohibition of establishment of telegraph or cable lines by foreigners.

CHAPTER 2—SUBMARINE CABLES

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| Sec. | |
| 21. | Submarine cables; willful injury to; punishment. |
| 22. | Negligent injury to submarine cables; punishment. |
| 23. | Injury to submarine cables in efforts to save life excepted. |
| 24. | Vessels laying cables; signals; avoidance of buoys. |
| 25. | Fishing vessels; duty to keep nets from cables. |
| 26. | Duties of commanders of warships. |
| 27. | Offending vessels to show nationality. |
| 28. | Penalties not to bar suits for damages. |
| 29. | Master of offending vessel punishable. |
| 30. | Definitions. |
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| 34. | Licenses for landing or operating cables connecting United States with foreign country; necessity for. |
| 35. | Withholding or revoking of licenses by President; terms and conditions of licenses. |
| 36. | Preventing landing or operating of cables; injunction. |
| 37. | Violations; punishment. |
| 38. | “United States” defined. |
| 39. | Amendment, modification, etc., of rights granted. |

§ 21. Submarine cables; willful injury to; punishment

Any person who shall willfully and wrongfully break or injure, or attempt to break or injure, or who shall in any manner procure, counsel, aid, abet, or be accessory to such breaking or injury, or attempt to break or injure, a submarine cable in such manner as to interrupt or embarrass, in whole or in part, telegraphic communication, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction thereof, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or to a fine not exceeding \$5,000, or to both fine and imprisonment, at the discretion of the court.

(Feb. 29, 1888, ch. 17, § 1, 25 Stat. 41.)

SHORT TITLE

Act Feb. 29, 1888, ch. 17, 25 Stat. 41, which enacted sections 21 to 33 of this title, is popularly known as the “Submarine Cable Act”.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

The protection of submarine cables was made the subject of an international convention between the United States and Germany, Argentine Confederation, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Brazil, Costa Rica, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Spain, United States of Columbia, France, Great Britain, Guatemala, Greece,

Italy, Turkey, Netherlands, Persia, Portugal, Roumania, Russia, Salvador, Serbia, Sweden and Norway, Uruguay, and the British Colonies. It was concluded Mar. 14, 1884, ratified Jan. 26, 1885, ratifications exchanged Apr. 16, 1885, proclaimed May 22, 1885, and entered into force for the United States May 1, 1888. Its provisions were set forth in 24 Stat. 989 to 1000.

§ 22. Negligent injury to submarine cables; punishment

Any person who by culpable negligence shall break or injure a submarine cable in such manner as to interrupt or embarrass, in whole or in part, telegraphic communication, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction thereof, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or to a fine not exceeding \$500, or to both fine and imprisonment, at the discretion of the court.

(Feb. 29, 1888, ch. 17, § 2, 25 Stat. 41.)

§ 23. Injury to submarine cables in efforts to save life excepted

The provisions of sections 21 and 22 of this title shall not apply to a person who breaks or injures a cable in an effort to save the life or limb of himself or of any other person, or to save his own or any other vessel: *Provided*, That he takes reasonable precautions to avoid such breaking or injury.

(Feb. 29, 1888, ch. 17, § 3, 25 Stat. 41.)

§ 24. Vessels laying cables; signals; avoidance of buoys

The master of any vessel which, while engaged in laying or repairing submarine cables, shall fail to observe the rules concerning signals that have been or shall be adopted by the parties to the convention described in section 30 of this title with a view to preventing collisions at sea; or the master of any vessel that, perceiving, or being able to perceive the said signals displayed upon a telegraph ship engaged in repairing a cable, shall not withdraw to or keep at distance of at least one nautical mile; or the master of any vessel that seeing or being able to see buoys intended to mark the position of a cable when being laid or when out of order or broken, shall not keep at a distance of at least a quarter of a nautical mile, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one month, or to a fine of not exceeding \$500.

(Feb. 29, 1888, ch. 17, § 4, 25 Stat. 41.)

§ 25. Fishing vessels; duty to keep nets from cables

The master of any fishing vessel who shall not keep his implements or nets at a distance of at least one nautical mile from a vessel engaged in laying or repairing a cable; or the master of any fishing vessel who shall not keep his implements or nets at a distance of at least a quarter of a nautical mile from a buoy or buoys intended to mark the position of a cable when being laid or when out of order or broken, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof, shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten days, or to a fine not exceeding \$250, or