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LB 514

SENATOR CROSBY: One minute.

SENATOR BROMM: ...out of the Universal Service Fund as is necessary to maximize the Lifeline credit. My amendment would result in a reduction of the phone bill for the folks on Lifeline of about ten dollars and fifty cents per month, instead of the five and a quarter per month. Now Senator Chambers would tell you that he'd like to do both and I'm not sure...I'm not sure at this point what all the ramifications are of doing both. I'm told that there's an issue of long distance carriers who bill direct, from out of state, rather than billing through a local company, and being able to affect those charges as they apply to Lifeline people. The workability might be a question. The...I...

SENATOR CROSBY: Time. Thank you, Senator Bromm. Senator Kristensen, on the Chambers amendment.

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: Thank you, Madam President, members of the Legislature. Senator Chambers brings what I would call the second generation of Universal Service Funds. In the current law, and I know that sometimes it's not the easiest to follow, but in the Telecommunications Universal Service Fund law that we have passed two years ago, we made a provision and we talked about, and I'm reading from the statute now, consumers in all regions of the state, including low-income consumers and those in rural and high-cost areas, should have access to telecommunications. Universal Service Funds were not just designed solely for people in high-cost areas. We tried to define what universal service meant, and universal service means as many people as possible can have basic dial tone telephone services. Universally, everybody across the state, would have the service. We've had good penetration, which means a high percentage of people who have Universal Service Funds. Also under the statute, we talk about funds for the support of low-income customers, schools, libraries, and providers of healthcare in rural areas will be available for those funds. And so what Senator Chambers is really saying, look, if you...if you truly believe in the concept of universal service then why are you going to tack on a 5 to 8 percent charge onto their phone service to provide phone service for other people? In