

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

March 1, 2000

LB 1285

agree with and, to set some minds at ease, I want to read some language that currently exists in the law with reference to these penalties. I'm reading from page 3, starting in line 15. "The amount of the civil penalty assessed in each case shall be based on the severity of the violation charged." That means you make the punishment fit the offense. Then continuing: "The commission may compromise or mitigate any penalty prior to hearing if all parties agree." Another way to weasel out of it if the parties are really of a mind to do the right thing. Continuing: "In determining the amount of the penalty, the commission shall consider the appropriateness of the penalty in light of the gravity of the violation and the good faith of the violator in attempting to achieve compliance after notification of the violation is given." So you must have a situation where a violation has occurred. The violator is given notification of the violation. If the violator commences immediately good faith attempts to comply all of that goes into looking at the kind of fine, if any, that would be levied. Under the language of the amendment and the existing law, the civil penalty is up to. When you use the term "up to" that means from zero to the maximum. So don't let that substitution of the word "ten" for "five", in terms of the number of thousands, make you feel this is now a mandatory fine for any violation no matter how trivial; whether it's substantive or technical, \$10,000. That is not the case. I think I ought to also emphasize that we're not dealing with neophytes or tyros in this situation. This is not a part of the law that will create a trap for the unwary. If you want to find an industry with powerful lawyers, powerful law firms and those who are well-versed not only in the law but have lobbyists at the federal level to try to get federal legislation to aid them in being stronger in overcoming what states do, the telecommunications industry is that industry. So this is not a case where the Legislature is converting the PSC into Goliath dealing with little David. All it's doing is saying that Goliath cannot be reduced, David cannot be made bigger, but we may put another stone in his little bag with which he can menace Goliath to some extent...well, Goliath's brother. David can say, I got your brother and I got the wherewithal to get you. But we should all learn from bad experiences. This does not have to be David trying to fell Goliath. It's a case where David is saying if Goliath complies with the law which is written, if Goliath complies with an order which must be clear