

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: Community Affairs Committee

BILL: SB 1062

INTRODUCER: Senator Diaz de la Portilla

SUBJECT: Coordinated 311 Nonemergency and Other Governmental Services Telephone Systems

DATE: February 8, 2006 REVISED: 2/14/06 _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Vickers</u>	<u>Yeatman</u>	<u>CA</u>	Fav/1 amendment
2.	_____	_____	<u>TA</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	<u>WM</u>	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

Please see last section for Summary of Amendments

- Technical amendments were recommended
- Amendments were recommended
- Significant amendments were recommended

I. Summary:

The bill establishes within the Department of Community Affairs a matching grant program to provide funds to local governments for the implementation and operation of “311 nonemergency and other government services telephone systems.” The bill authorizes the department to review and prioritize grant applications and provides an initial year appropriation of \$10 million to fund the grant program.

This bill creates section 365.180 of the Florida Statutes. In addition, this bill creates unnumbered sections of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

The History of 311 Systems - In 1997 the Federal Communications Commission designated “311” as a national, voluntary, non-toll, three-digit telephone number for non-emergencies. This designation was prompted by concerns relating to the misuse of 911 emergency systems. Evaluations of 911 usage during the mid-1990’s indicated that 50 to 90 percent of all calls to 911

were not actual emergencies.¹ These non-emergency calls resulted in backlogs and inefficiencies for public safety agencies, as well as frustration for callers with emergency needs.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, 311 systems vary in the types of non-emergency calls handled, as designated by individual jurisdictions. Similar to 911 systems, 311 call centers generally operate 24 hours a day, take requests for service only inside their jurisdictions and often dispatch assistance. Employees are also trained to deal with 911 emergencies in case of inappropriate/misdirected calls. Examples of non-emergency calls include incidents that are non-life threatening and do not require an immediate response, such as:

- animal disturbances,
- loitering,
- loud noise,
- abandoned cars,
- parking complaints,
- garbage pile-ups,
- water leaks,
- potholes,
- street-light outages,
- street closure inquiries, and
- stolen property.

Florida's 311 Experience - Emergency management officials in Miami-Dade County made extensive use of the recently activated 311 system during the 2005 hurricane season. During the activations for Hurricanes Rita, Katrina and Wilma, 311 handled more than 250,000 calls immediately before, during and after the storms. County officials reported that during these activations, the 311 system was able to take many calls that would have previously gone to 911, enabling the 911 system to remain available for truly life-threatening situations.² County officials identified the following benefits associated with the 311 system:

- Provides a fast, simple and convenient single access point for residents to obtain information and request services from their local government;
- Makes delivery of services more efficient and effective by consolidating agency-based answer centers and streamlining processes;
- Increases governments' ability to respond to unanticipated events, e.g. severe storm events and hurricanes, by steering non-emergency calls away from 911, preserving the availability of the emergency system for callers truly in need of immediate response;
- Improves individual department service delivery and accountability through real-time, countywide service performance tracking and reporting;

¹ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing, "311 for Non-Emergencies – Helping Communities One Call at a Time", August 25, 2003.

² Letter from Commissioner Joe Martinez, Chairman of the Miami-Dade County Commission, to Senator Alex Diaz de la Portilla, November 29, 2005.

- Provides ‘closed loop’ communications with citizens by integrating front-end service requests with the back-end resolution processes; and
- Provides seamless multi-jurisdictional services for citizens regardless of where they live.

Currently, Miami-Dade and Orange are the only Florida counties that have operational 311 systems. However, a number of local governments have expressed interest in implementing a 311 system.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill authorizes the Department of Community Affairs to accept and administer funds to counties and municipalities for the establishment of 311 nonemergency systems. The bill specifies that such a 311 system must be multi-jurisdictional and designed to provide seamless access to nonemergency and other governmental services. The bill also requires a 100 percent match for grants awarded to applicants. Grants may not exceed the lesser of \$2.5 million or 50 percent of the total annual cost of the system, and the total grants awarded to a system may not exceed \$10 million in a five-year period.

Department staff is directed to review and prioritize grant applications prior to submission of the applications to the Secretary for approval. The bill provides that no later than December 15, 2007, each awarded system must provide a detailed expenditure report to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives. The department is authorized to adopt rules for administering this grants program, including the criteria to be applied in order to evaluate applications for grants.³

Finally, the bill appropriates \$10 million from the General Revenue Fund to the department for the 2006-2007 fiscal year for the purpose of funding grants for coordinated 311 systems.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

³ While the bill authorizes the department to review, prioritize, and approve grant applications, it does not specify the criteria to be utilized in this process. As a result, the department’s selections may be questioned as an unlawful exercise of discretion.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill appropriates \$10 million from the General Revenue Fund to the department for the 2006-2007 fiscal year for the purpose of funding grants for coordinated 311 systems.

The Department of Community Affairs reported that this bill will require additional staff to administer the program. The fiscal impact of the bill on the department is unknown.

The matching grant program would provide local governments with a potential source of funding for the implementation of coordinated 311 systems.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

VIII. Summary of Amendments:

Barcode 565038 by Community Affairs:

Specifies criteria for the department to utilize in awarding grants to local governments for 311 telephone systems.

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