

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

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

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Budget Subcommittee on Finance and Tax

BILL: CS/SB 1198

INTRODUCER: Committee on Communications, Energy and Public Utilities and Senator Bogdanoff

SUBJECT: Communications Services Tax

DATE: March 28, 2011      REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Wiehle	Carter	CU	<b>Fav/CS</b>
2.	Cote	Diez-Arguelles	BFT	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
3.			BC	
4.				
5.				
6.				

**Please see Section VIII. for Additional Information:**

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|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| A. COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE..... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Statement of Substantial Changes        |
| B. AMENDMENTS.....           | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Technical amendments were recommended   |
|                              | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Amendments were recommended             |
|                              | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Significant amendments were recommended |

**I. Summary:**

The bill requires that a communication service provider compute the tax due on a sale of communications services imposed pursuant to the communications services tax and the gross receipts tax based on a rounding algorithm that meets specified criteria. The bill is intended to be remedial in nature and to apply retroactively; however, it is not intended to provide a basis for an assessment of any tax not paid or to create a right to a refund of any tax paid under this section before July 1, 2011.

The bill substantially amends section 202.16 of the Florida Statutes.

**II. Present Situation:**

Chapter 202, F.S., establishes the Communications Services Tax Simplification Law. This law restructured taxes applicable to a broad array of communications services, including local and long distance telephone services, cable television, direct-to-home satellite television, and other related services.

The communications services tax (CST) replaced and consolidated several different state and local taxes and fees into two taxes: the Florida CST and the local CST. The Florida CST is established in s. 202.12, F.S., and is applied at a rate of 6.65 percent to all communications services except direct-to-home satellite services, which are taxed at a rate of 10.8 percent. The local CST is established in s. 202.19, F.S., varies by jurisdiction, and is not applicable to direct-to-home satellite services. The Florida CST and the local CST are collected by communications service providers and remitted to the Department of Revenue (DOR), who distributes the proceeds to the appropriate jurisdictions.

Chapter 203, F.S., provides for gross receipts tax of 2.52 percent applied to communication services. The state CST and gross receipt tax result in a combined rate of 9.17 percent applied to the purchase of most communication services. Direct-to-home services are taxed at a rate of 2.37 percent, for a combined state CST and gross receipt tax rate of 13.17 percent.

Section 202.16(3), F.S., requires the Department of Revenue (DOR) to make available to dealers, in an electronic format or otherwise, the tax amounts and brackets applicable to each taxable sale such that the tax collected results in a tax rate no less than the tax rate imposed pursuant to chapters 202 and 203, F.S. To clarify the law, the DOR has created proposed Rule 12A-19.021, F.A.C.<sup>1</sup>. The purpose of the proposed rule is to make available the tax amounts and brackets applicable to each taxable sale of communication services on the DOR's website. The proposed rule provides that any communication services tax resulting in a fraction of a cent is rounded to the next whole cent. The DOR has held a public workshop and multiple hearings to address concerns or questions regarding the proposed rule. At this time, no rule has been adopted.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

Section 1 amends s. 202.16, F.S., to require that a communication service provider compute the tax due on a sale of communications services based on a rounding algorithm that meets the following criteria:

- The tax computation must be carried to the third decimal place.
- The tax must be rounded to a whole cent using a method that rounds up to the next cent whenever the third decimal place is greater than four.

A service provider will be allowed to compute the tax due on a sale of communications services on an item or an invoice basis.

The rounding algorithm must be applied to the local CST separately from its application to the state CST and gross receipts tax.

A dealer may elect to apply the rounding algorithm to the communications services taxes imposed pursuant to ss. 202.12 and 203.01, F.S., in one of the following manners:

- Apply the rounding algorithm to the combined communications services tax imposed pursuant to ss. 202.12 and 203.01, F.S.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://dor.myflorida.com/dor/rules/12a-19021.html>

- Apply the rounding algorithm separately to the communications services tax imposed pursuant to s. 202.12(1)(a), F.S., and gross receipt tax imposed pursuant to ss. 203.01(1)(b)2, and 203.01(1)(b)3, F.S.
- Apply the rounding algorithm to the combined taxes imposed pursuant to ss. 202.12(1)(a) and 203.01(1)(b)3, F.S., as allowed by s. 203.001, F.S., and apply the rounding algorithm separately to the gross receipts tax pursuant to s. 203.01(1)(b)2, F.S.

A dealer is not required to collect the tax based on a bracket system.

Section 2 provides that the bill is intended to be remedial in nature and to apply retroactively; however, it is not intended to provide a basis for an assessment of any tax not paid or to create a right to a refund of any tax paid under this section before July 1, 2011.

Section 3 provides that the bill takes effect July 1, 2011.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

#### **V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

On April 8, 2011, the REC determined that this bill, if amended to clarify how taxable items would be treated, would have no impact on state or local revenues because the proposed change does not differ from current administration.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

#### **VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Additional Information:**

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**  
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

**CS by Communications, Energy, and Public Utilities on March 21, 2011.**

The committee substitute requires application of the rounding algorithm to the local communications services tax separately from the state taxes, and provides a more detailed statement of how the algorithm may be applied to the state taxes.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.