



Bill Analysis

Author: Lowenthal

Sponsor:

Bill Number: AB 1135

Related Bills: See Legislative
History

Amended: January 3, 2024

SUBJECT

State Toll-Free and Non-Toll-Free Telephone Lines

SUMMARY

This bill would, under the Government Code (GOV), require state agencies, including the Franchise Tax Board (FTB), to transition from using toll-free numbers to non-toll-free telephone numbers as the primary method for the public to contact the FTB.

RECOMMENDATION

No position.

SUMMARY OF AMENDMENTS

The January 3, 2024, amendments removed the previous provision, and replaced it with the provisions discussed in this analysis. The January 3, 2023, amendments resolved some of the previously identified implementation considerations and the policy consideration. These amendments would require the FTB to transition using a non-toll-free number as the primary method for the public to contact the FTB, however, would allow the FTB to continue to use a toll-free number.

The amendments created two new implementation and technical considerations.

REASON FOR THE BILL

The reason for this bill is to reduce state costs by transitioning from the use of toll-free numbers to non-toll-free numbers by state agencies.

ANALYSIS

This bill would, under the GOV, require state agencies, including the FTB, to transition from using toll-free numbers to non-toll-free telephone numbers as the primary method for the public to make a voice call to the FTB.

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By July 1, 2025, the FTB would be required to update its internet website by replacing the toll-free number with the non-toll-free number as the primary method for the public to contact the FTB. When updating publications, the FTB would be required to update publications with the non-toll-free number.

The FTB would be required to continue to offer a toll-free number to the public for voice calls.

This bill would require the FTB to ensure equitable access to all members of the public based on:

- Availability and affordability of voice calling plans that allow a customer to make voice calls without per-minute charges.
- Availability and affordability of alternative methods to contact the FTB to the public.

Finally, a state agency could install and operate a toll-free or non-toll-free number with approval by the Department of Technology (CDT). Once approved, the state agency must publish toll-free or non-toll-free number at least once in the California Regulatory Notice Register.

Effective/Operative Date

This bill would be effective and operative January 1, 2025.

Federal/State Law

Federal Law

No comparable provision in federal law.

State Law

Current state law provides that a state agency may install and operate toll-free telephone lease lines with the approval of the Department of General Services (DGS). The purpose of the toll-free lines is to provide access to the public and local government agencies. DGS has guidelines to promote efficient use of a toll-free lease lines by state agencies. All toll-free telephone numbers are required to be published at least once, in the California Regulatory Notice Register. In addition, information available on toll-free lease lines must be accessible by both tone dial and rotary dial telephones.

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Implementation Considerations

The FTB has identified the following implementation consideration and is available to work with the author's office to resolve this and other considerations that may be identified.

The FTB currently operates multiple toll-free numbers. The bill is silent regarding whether the FTB would need to obtain CDT approval to continue to operate each of the current toll-free numbers the FTB decides to continue to use.

This bill requires the FTB to continue to offer a toll-free number to the public for voice calls. However, this bill also states that a state agency could install and operate a toll-free or non-toll-free number with approval by CDT. The bill's intent is not clear as to whether the department must continue to offer a toll-free number or if the department would be required to obtain CDT's approval in order to do so. An amendment would be required to clarify the intent.

Technical Considerations

The FTB uses different toll-free numbers depending on which area the public is trying to reach. The author may wish to amend the bill to provide that "each" toll-free number maintained by the state agency should be replaced with a non-toll-free number as the primary method of making a voice call to contact the agency.

For clarity, in Section 11000.15 subdivision (d), it is recommended that the phrase "on the effective date" be replaced with "on and after the effective date."

Policy Considerations

None noted.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

No legislation similar to this bill has been identified.

PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The FTB uses numerous toll-free numbers to allow taxpayers to communicate easily with the FTB. Toll-free numbers are shared in numerous places including the following:

- Approximately 125 current year tax forms.
- Over 2700 forms and publications.
- Approximately 250 static web pages.

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FISCAL IMPACT

The FTB's costs to implement this bill have yet to be determined. As the bill moves through the legislative process, costs will be determined.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Revenue Estimate

This bill as amended on January 3, 2024, would not impact state income or franchise tax revenue.

LEGAL IMPACT

None noted.

APPOINTMENTS

None noted.

SUPPORT/OPPOSITION

To be determined.

ARGUMENTS

To be determined.

LEGISLATIVE CONTACT

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