



SUPPORT

Telephone Rates for Religious Organizations

A6631 Brodsky

This bill requires telephone companies to charge religious organizations residential rates for local telephone services.

Until recently, telephone companies did voluntarily charge religious bodies residential telephone rates for local telephone service, but an increasing number of religious organizations are now paying *commercial* rates for local telephone services. This greatly increases the financial burden on the religious body, which is providing social and spiritual services to better the community. These religious bodies are not-for-profit organizations operating on limited member contributions.

Since 1934, the New York State Legislature and the courts have given religious organizations (churches and other non-profit organizations) preferential treatment on many matters, including residential rates for gas and electricity. For example:

- In February 1982, the New York Court of Appeals ruled unanimously that religious bodies were to pay residential gas and electric rates, even if they had a Christian school meeting in their facility that was teaching secular subjects.
- Chapter 171 of the laws of 1983 reaffirmed the court's case.
- Chapter 30 of the laws of 1991 established that the utilities would charge religious bodies using three-phase electrical power the residential rates for electricity.

A6631 would provide similar assistance to religious organizations with regard to their telephone bills.

New Yorkers for Constitutional Freedoms and the thousands of churches it represents ask the New York State Assembly to do the same.