

REGULATION OF 976 INFORMATION ACCESS SERVICE

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 1986

Reviewed October 2008

- WHEREAS, PTA, in keeping with its Objects and principles, is an advocate for public policy and laws which protect children and youth from exploitation, abuse and unwholesome influences; and
- WHEREAS, 976 Information Access Service numbers include recorded messages which may be emotionally persuasive and manipulative of children, as well as those messages which are clearly pornographic; and
- WHEREAS, It is against the spirit and the letter of the law to contract with minors or to make pornography easily accessible to minors; and
- WHEREAS, It is unfair and unjust to require customer payment to discontinue a “service” which was not affirmatively elected; and
- WHEREAS, The Public Utilities Commission has heard corporate testimony that in-home blocking at no cost to the customer would be prohibitively expensive due to the anticipated numbers of requests for such action; and
- WHEREAS, The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) has heard individual testimony to the effect that 976 Information Access Service provides information some persons want or need and are willing to pay for; and
- WHEREAS, Paid private access would ensure the Constitutional rights of those who wish to provide and/or receive certain information, while also protecting the rights of those who do not elect such services, and would serve to protect many children from the exploitation of their innocence through a common household device; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge the California Public Utilities Commission to promulgate regulations designating the 976 Information Access Service as one of the optional “Custom Calling” services in addition to basic “Standard Measured Service;” allowing telephone companies to provide the 976 service only to those customers who subscribe to it; and prohibiting telephone companies from charging any customer for electing not to have 976 Information Access Service; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That local PTAs be encouraged to work in their districts to increase public awareness of these issues and/or to address problems raised by unlimited access to Information Access Service Numbers.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Telephone corporations in California and throughout the nation market Information Access Service (IAS), with the prefix numbers 976. The numbers are leased by a broad range of businesses and services and deliver recorded messages to callers. Messages include sports updates, business information and promotions such as calls to Santa, and hard core pornography. Unlike the broadcasting industry, which is required by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to know the content of what is broadcast, the telephone companies face no such requirement.

The caller is billed a fee of twenty cents to two dollars for each 976 IAS call, plus any applicable toll charges, either within an area code or for long distance calls to other areas. Like other calls, 976 calls may be charged to a number other than that being used to place the call. Figures compiled by the phone companies indicate that more than 25% of all IAS calls are to “adult entertainment” numbers and that these calls account for 60% to 75% of total revenues from the IAS customer charges. At the present time, the 976 IAS message access is included in the service package for all subscribers of participating telephone companies, and the telephone company charges a fee for deletion of the service. All 976 numbers are accessible to anyone able to use a telephone.