

HOUSE BILL NO. 444

INTRODUCED BY D. ZOLNIKOV

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4 A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT GENERALLY REVISING LAWS RELATED TO ELECTRONIC  
5 COMMUNICATIONS; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS; REQUIRING A SEARCH WARRANT FOR DISCLOSURE OF  
6 ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS BY A PROVIDER OF AN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION SERVICE;  
7 REQUIRING CERTAIN NOTICE BE GIVEN TO A CUSTOMER OF AN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION  
8 SERVICE IF THE CONTENTS OF AN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION ARE GIVEN TO A GOVERNMENTAL  
9 ENTITY; ALLOWING DELAYED NOTICE UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES; DISALLOWING CERTAIN  
10 EVIDENCE IN CERTAIN PROCEEDINGS; ALLOWING THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO COMMENCE CIVIL  
11 ACTIONS AGAINST GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES TO COMPEL COMPLIANCE; ALLOWING A PROVIDER OF  
12 AN ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION SERVICE STANDING TO CHALLENGE CERTAIN WARRANTS; AND  
13 ALLOWING VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION INFORMATION."

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15 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

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17 NEW SECTION. **Section 1. Definitions.** As used in [sections 1 through 8], the following definitions  
18 apply:

19 (1) "Contents" means any information concerning the substance, purport, or meaning of a  
20 communication.

21 (2) "Electronic communication" means:  
22 (a) any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted  
23 in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photoelectronic, or photooptical system; or

24 (b) any aural transfer made in whole or in part through the use of facilities for the transmission of  
25 communications by the aid of wire, cable, or other similar connection between the point of origin and the point  
26 of reception, including but not limited to the use of the wire, cable, or other similar connection in a switching  
27 station.

28 (c) The term does not include:  
29 (i) an oral communication uttered by a person exhibiting an expectation that the communication is not  
30 subject to interception under circumstances justifying the expectation;



- 1 (ii) a communication made through a tone-only paging device;
- 2 (iii) a communication from a tracking device, including an electronic or mechanical device that permits
- 3 the tracking of the movement of a person or object; or
- 4 (iv) electronic funds transfer information stored by a financial institution in a communications system used
- 5 for the electronic storage and transfer of funds.

- 6 (3) "Electronic communication service" means:
- 7 (a) a service that provides to users the ability to send or receive electronic communications;
- 8 (b) a service that provides to users computer storage or processing services; or
- 9 (c) a service that acts as an intermediary in the transmission of electronic communications.

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11 **NEW SECTION. Section 2. Search warrant required.** A governmental entity may only require

12 disclosure by a provider of an electronic communication service of the contents of an electronic communication

13 stored, held, or maintained by that service pursuant to a warrant issued by a court upon a finding of probable

14 cause that:

- 15 (1) a crime has been committed; and
- 16 (2) evidence will be found in the place to be searched.

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18 **NEW SECTION. Section 3. Notice -- delayed notice.** (1) At or before the time that a governmental

19 entity receives the contents of an electronic communication of a subscriber or customer from a provider of an

20 electronic communication service pursuant to [section 2], the governmental entity shall serve upon or deliver to

21 by registered or first-class mail, electronic mail, or other means reasonably calculated to be effective, as specified

22 by the court issuing the warrant, the subscriber or customer:

- 23 (a) a copy of the warrant; and
- 24 (b) notice that informs the customer or subscriber:
  - 25 (i) of the nature of the government inquiry with reasonable specificity;
  - 26 (ii) that information maintained for the customer or subscriber by the provider of electronic
  - 27 communication service named in the process or request was supplied to or requested by the governmental entity;
  - 28 and
  - 29 (iii) of the date on which the warrant was served on the provider.

30 (2) (a) A governmental entity that is seeking a warrant under [section 2] may include in the application

1 for the warrant a request for an order delaying the notification required under subsection (1) of this section for  
2 a period of not more than 90 days.

3 (b) A governmental entity that is obtaining the contents of an electronic communication may apply to a  
4 court for an order directing the provider of an electronic communication service to which a warrant under [section  
5 2] is directed not to notify any other person of the existence of the warrant for a period of not more than 90 days.

6 (c) A court shall grant a request for delayed notification made under subsection (2)(a) or (2)(b) if the court  
7 determines that there is reason to believe that notification of the existence of the warrant may result in:

8 (i) endangering the life or physical safety of an individual;

9 (ii) flight from prosecution;

10 (iii) destruction or tampering with evidence;

11 (iv) intimidation of potential witnesses; or

12 (v) otherwise seriously jeopardizing an investigation or unduly delaying a trial.

13 (d) Upon request by a governmental entity, a court may grant one or more extensions of the delay of  
14 notification granted under subsection (2)(c) of not more than 90 days each.

15 (e) Upon expiration of the period of delay under subsections (2)(c) or (2)(d), the governmental entity shall  
16 serve upon, or deliver to by registered or first-class mail, electronic mail, or other means reasonably calculated  
17 to be effective, as specified by the court issuing the warrant, the subscriber or customer a notice that:

18 (i) includes the information referred to in subsection (1); and

19 (ii) informs the customer or subscriber:

20 (A) that notification of the customer or subscriber was delayed;

21 (B) the identity of the court authorizing the delay; and

22 (C) of the provision of subsection (2)(c) under which the delay was authorized.

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24 **NEW SECTION. Section 4. Rules of construction.** (1) Except as expressly provided, nothing in  
25 [sections 1 through 8] may be construed to limit an electronic communications service or any other party from  
26 disclosing information about a request issued by a governmental entity for electronic communication information.

27 (2) Nothing in [sections 2 and 3] may be construed to limit the authority of a governmental entity to use  
28 a subpoena authorized under the laws of this state to require an entity that provides electronic communication  
29 services to its own officers, directors, employees, or agents for the purpose of carrying out their duties to disclose  
30 to a governmental entity the contents of an electronic communication to or from an officer, director, employee,

1 or agent of the entity, if the electronic communication is held, stored, or maintained on an electronic  
2 communications system owned or operated by the entity.

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4 **NEW SECTION. Section 5. Admissibility of proof -- violations.** (1) Except as proof of a violation of  
5 [sections 1 through 8], evidence obtained in violation of [sections 1 through 8] is not admissible in a civil, criminal,  
6 or administrative proceeding and may not be used in an affidavit in an effort to obtain a search warrant or court  
7 order.

8 (2) The attorney general may apply for an injunction or commence a civil action against any government  
9 entity to compel compliance with the terms of [sections 1 through 8].

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11 **NEW SECTION. Section 6. Standing to challenge warrant.** Providers of electronic communications  
12 service subject to a warrant or other legal process under [sections 1 through 8] have standing to challenge a  
13 warrant or other legal process that is inconsistent with [sections 1 through 8], any other statute or law, or the state  
14 or federal constitution.

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16 **NEW SECTION. Section 7. No cause of action against providers.** No cause of action shall lie in  
17 any court against any provider of electronic communication service, its officers, employees, agents, or other  
18 specified persons for providing information or assistance in accordance with the terms of [sections 1 through 8].

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20 **NEW SECTION. Section 8. Voluntary disclosure of electronic communications.** Nothing in  
21 [sections 1 through 8] prohibits the voluntary disclosure of electronic communication information by a provider  
22 of electronic communications service or any other entity when such disclosure is not otherwise prohibited by law,  
23 including but not limited to when:

24 (1) the provider first obtains the lawful consent of the subscriber or customer, or originator, an  
25 addressee, or intended recipient of the electronic communication; or

26 (2) the provider, in good faith, believes that an emergency involving danger, death, or serious physical  
27 injury to any person requires disclosure without delay of communications relating to the emergency.

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29 **NEW SECTION. Section 9. Codification instruction.** [Sections 1 through 8] are intended to be codified  
30 as an integral part of Title 46, chapter 5, and the provisions of Title 46, chapter 5, apply to [sections 1 through 8].

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