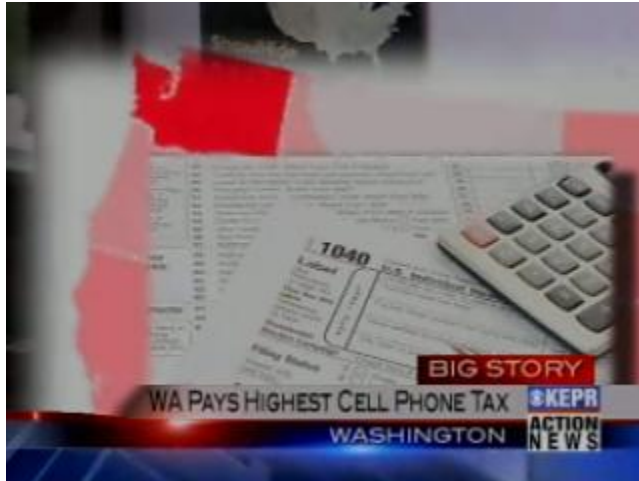


WA Pays Highest Cell Phone Tax in Nation

Tools



By Chelsea Kopta

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PASCO, Wash. -- Perhaps nothing is certain in Washington State but taxes and complaining about taxes. Now there's a new hike to gripe about: your cell phone.

Cell phones are the tax man's latest target. And if you didn't feel you were taxed enough, try this on for size: a new cell phone tax could add up to \$10 to your bill on top of what you already pay.

According to CTIA-The Wireless Association, an industry trade group, Washington now pays the highest cell phone tax in the country at nearly 24%. That's more than people in Oregon (6.79%) and Idaho (7.25%) combined, and close to double what people in California pay.

Why? It's a way for states to make up what they lost tax revenues from consumers who are shedding landlines.

It's just the latest in a long line of taxes that are higher in our state than every other state.

KEPR talked to Columbia Basin College economist Dean Schau. We asked, "Do you think people in Washington are being nickel and dimed?" Schau replied "Yes. You're being nickel and dimed but you don't have an income tax."

Washington doesn't have an income tax and because of that, you're taxed more for everything else. Washington pays the most in the country for liquor and cigarettes not far behind. There's also, of course, Washington's sky-high gas tax.

These are part of the reason the non-partisan think tank, the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, labeled Washington's tax system the most "regressive" in the nation in the fall of 2009.

At the same time, Senator Maria Cantwell announced a new bill Tuesday to deduct sales taxes on your federal tax return including items as big as a car as small as a pen or as frustrating as expensive wireless bills. To be clear, Cantwell's proposal is not directly related to increased cell phone taxes. She wants to correct a change from 25 years ago that prevented deductions for sales tax but it could help reduce some of the sales tax cost on cell phones.

Regressive or not, fair or not, the state needs to make money. In November, voters spoke loud and clear that they didn't want a state income tax so the nickel and diming will continue for now.

Washington ranks 18th highest in the country for what you pay in state and local taxes, roughly \$4,000 a year.