

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 22, 2026

The Honorable Brendan Carr
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
45 L Street, NE
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Carr:

On behalf of the constituents of the California Delegation, we raise serious concerns with AT&T's petitions to discontinue landline service, be relieved of its Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) obligations and remove its Eligible Telecommunications Carrier status. This continued attempt by AT&T to cease operations of critical networks in areas that are prone to wildfires, landslides, massive snowstorms, and earthquakes would leave approximately 200,000 California residential and business customers without alternative communications in the event of a cellular outage. Relatedly, as has befallen AT&T in the recent past, these outages could last for days, weeks, and in some cases, months. We urge the Commission to deny AT&T's various applications because the negative consequences for the public far outweigh any benefits, and the proposed replacement is wholly inadequate.

Congress has, in the past, advocated for the maintenance of landline service to address the worsening severity of natural disasters and their impact on our constituents. In 2024, fifteen members of the California delegation sent a bipartisan letter to then CPUC President Alice Busching Reynolds explaining the need for continued landline service and Congress' actions to provide funds to ensure residents are able to communicate and reach emergency services during natural disasters.¹ As we highlighted then and do so again now, there is no remediation possible for loss of life.

The FCC's stated mission is to ensure that all people of the United States, without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex have access to rapid, efficient, nationwide and worldwide communications services for the purpose of promoting safety of life and property. Granting AT&T's petitions is incompatible with this goal. The increasing frequency and severity of fires, earthquakes, floods, and other natural disasters, has created situations where households can be left without power for days and weeks at a time. In fact, this year alone CalFire has already reported over two thousand fires affecting approximately sixty-five thousand acres of land across California. If landlines are removed, it presents the very real question of how affected households will be able to call for emergency services in areas where cellular reception is weak or non-existent. Moreover, the removal of landlines makes it unclear how emergency services will be able to reach affected households with evacuation information or assistance.

We recognize the importance of modernizing our networks and expanding fiber-optic infrastructure to underserved communities. However, these efforts must be carried out in a manner that protects public safety and preserves resilient access for vulnerable communities during emergencies and outages.

¹ Letter from Reps. Thompson, LaMalfa et al. to Alice Busching Reynolds, President, California Public Utilities Commission, Feb. 20, 2024, <https://mikethompson.house.gov/newsroom/press-releases/thompson-leads-bipartisan-letter-calling-cpuc-protect-access-landline>.

AT&T's proposed wireless replacement system, "Phone—Advanced," lacks the resilience of traditional copper networks during emergency situations. Unlike copper lines, wireless infrastructure depends on electrical grids and cellular towers that are highly vulnerable to destruction during natural disasters. Furthermore, California regulatory authorities recently admonished AT&T for providing incomplete and contradictory data regarding the actual availability and quality of alternative wireless coverage in these regions. While AT&T seeks federal approval to discontinue these services, our constituents are already reporting localized network service disruptions alongside increasing monthly costs.

Beyond the immediate impact on emergency communications, AT&T's petitions seek to override established state-level authority. Under Section 254 of the Communications Act of 1934, states retain clear authority to regulate intrastate telecommunications to safeguard public safety. Allowing a federal preemption in this instance would diminish California's oversight capabilities and set a far-reaching precedent regarding state sovereignty over public utilities nationwide. We ask the Commission to respect the state's role as a primary regulator of local public safety and utility service standards.

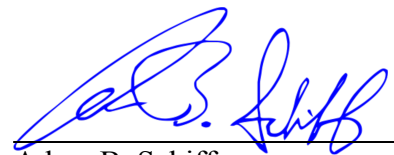
As of June 22, 2026, almost 450 comments have been received by the Commission asking it to deny AT&T's varying petitions. And the concerns remain bipartisan, as Californians across the political spectrum recognize that seniors, rural residents, and people living in areas prone to natural disasters rely on landlines as a lifesaving backstop.²

We urge you to fully and fairly consider these comments when determining whether to approve AT&T's petitions. If the Commission moves forward with an approval, which we believe will cause great harm in California, we urge the Commission to, at a minimum, consider an exception for residents who live in high fire threat areas, areas prone to other natural disasters, and areas where there is no verified data on indoor cellular service reliability and quality. We encourage you to fully consider the concerns from our constituents about the impacts the loss of land lines would have on the safety of our communities.

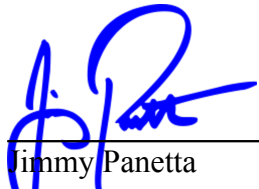
Sincerely,



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

² See, e.g., Letter from Steve Hilton to FCC Chairman Carr, July 6, 2026 ("The FCC should not wipe away state consumer protections and public-safety rules simply because a large corporation no longer wants to maintain a service that vulnerable Californians still rely on."); Ben Paviour, *Steve Hilton asks Trump's FCC to stand down in California landline dispute*, Sacramento Bee, July 6, 2026, <https://www.sacbee.com/news/politics-government/capitol-alert/article316406147.html>.



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



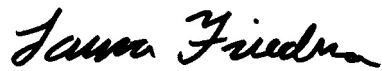
Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



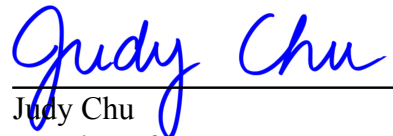
Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



Jim Costa
Member of Congress



Laura Friedman
Member of Congress



Judy Chu
Member of Congress



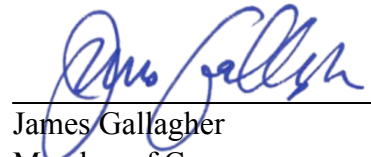
Mike Levin
Member of Congress



Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



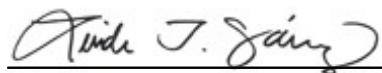
James Gallagher
Member of Congress



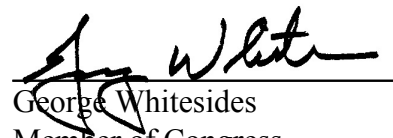
Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



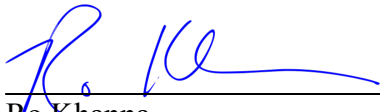
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



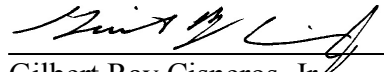
Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



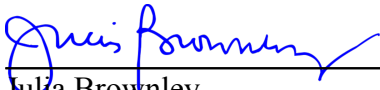
George Whitesides
Member of Congress



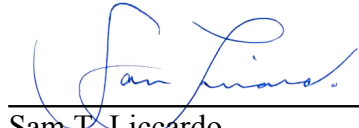
Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



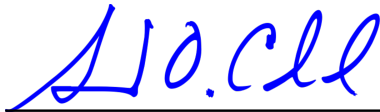
Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



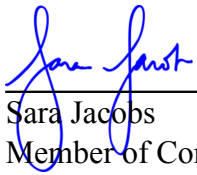
Sam T. Liccardo
Member of Congress



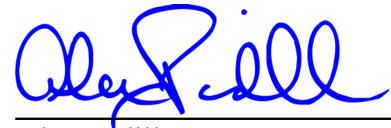
Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress