



California Public Utilities Commission

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PUC ISSUES HISTORIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS CONSUMER BILL OF RIGHTS DRAFT

The California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) today unveiled its groundbreaking Telecommunications Consumer Bill of Rights draft, which declares that all consumers who interact with telecommunications providers be afforded certain basic rights. This includes the rights to:

- **Disclosure:** Consumers have a right to receive clear and complete information about rates, terms and conditions for available products and services, and to be charged only according to the rates, terms and conditions they have agreed to.
- **Choice:** Consumers have a right to select their services and vendors, and to have those choices respected by industry.
- **Privacy:** Consumers have a right to personal privacy, to have protection from unauthorized use of their records and personal information, and to reject intrusive communications and technology.
- **Public Participation and Enforcement:** Consumers have a right to participate in public policy proceedings, to be informed of their rights and what agencies enforce those rights, and to have effective recourse if their rights are violated.
- **Accurate Bills and Redress:** Consumers have a right to accurate and understandable bills for products and services they authorize, and to fair, prompt and courteous redress for problems they encounter.
- **Non-Discrimination:** Every consumer has the right to be treated equally to all other similarly situated consumers, free of prejudice or disadvantage.
- **Safety:** Consumers have a right to safety and security of their persons and property.

“Today’s telecommunications customer has many choices of service providers. Consumers will be better protected from unfair business practices with an appropriate set of rights and responsibilities, and the Commission will be better able to enforce rules evenhandedly when they are clearly expressed and applicable to all competitors,” said PUC Commissioner Carl Wood, sponsor of the proposed Bill of Rights.

To that end, the Commission has developed consumer protection rules, which include safeguards against unfair marketing practices, service termination, backbilling, tariff and contract changes, and billing disputes.

Currently, rules and regulations governing carriers have evolved differently for wireless, long-distance, and local services due to the pace of technological change, the emergence of competition, and the processes by which issues are raised before the Commission. The Commission’s new rules aim to level the playing field for all carriers and lessen consumer confusion.

“Consumers are entitled to understandable protections, and it is the duty of the PUC to create and enforce those protections,” said Wood. “This Bill of Rights is a model for the rest of the country to follow as we move towards a more diverse marketplace in the telecommunications industry.”

Parties have 20 days to submit comments to the Commission regarding the Telecommunications Consumer Bill of Rights draft. Following receipt of comments, the proposed new rules will be voted on by the full Commission, possibly at its August 8 meeting.

For the complete draft of the Bill of Rights, please visit the PUC’s web site at www.cpuc.ca.gov.

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