



California Public Utilities Commission

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PUC TO CONSIDER WAYS TO IMPROVE SERVICES TO TELECOMMUNICATIONS CUSTOMERS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH SKILLS

SAN FRANCISCO, January 11, 2007 -- The California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) today said it will consider ways to improve services to California telecommunications consumers who do not speak English fluently.

The Commission opened a language proceeding to focus on ways of ensuring that customers with limited proficiency in English have access to the information and assistance they need to obtain and maintain telecommunications services.

On March 2, 2006, the Commission issued a decision (D.06-03-013) known as the Consumer Protection Initiative, which explored the rights of and protections available to California telecommunications consumers. Based on concerns from community based organizations, the decision raised the question of whether phone consumers with limited proficiency in English may need special rules, noting that language barriers may interfere with consumers' understanding of service options, make consumers more vulnerable to fraud and abuse, and impede resolution of questions and complaints. The order raised the need to consider whether formal regulatory action may be appropriate, and ordered the PUC staff to study the issue and come up with recommendations.

Subsequently, Commission staff held two workshops, four public participation hearings across the state, reviewed the law, identified best practices at the federal level and of other state agencies, and studied the needs and services currently available to consumers with limited English skills.

Commission staff subsequently compiled a report (<http://www.cpuc.ca.gov/PUBLISHED/REPORT/60608.htm>), which proposed that the Commission take action to improve telecommunications services to customers with limited English skills and the

proceeding opened today is modeled on the report's suggestions. PUC President Michael R. Peevey is the Commissioner assigned to this proceeding.

Comments are due 45 days from the mailing of today's decision and reply comments are due 21 days thereafter. The Commission may conduct workshops and use settlement conferences or mediation sessions if it appears they may be needed or useful in order to clarify proposals or issues, to promote the exchange of ideas, or to assist parties in developing jointly recommended proposals or procedures.

For more information on the PUC, please visit www.cpuc.ca.gov.

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