



Assemblywoman Fiona Ma, 12th District



California Public Utilities Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

Media Contacts:

Assemblywoman Fiona Ma's Office: Nick Hardeman, 415-999-9277

PUC: Terrie Prosper, 415.703.1366, news@cpuc.ca.gov

**ASSEMBLYWOMAN MA AND PUC COMMISSIONER CHONG
ENCOURAGE QUALIFYING CONSUMERS TO JOIN
LOW-INCOME TELEPHONE PROGRAM**

SAN FRANCISCO, February 9, 2007 – California State Assemblywoman Fiona Ma (D-San Francisco) and Commissioner Rachelle Chong of the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) today joined forces to raise awareness of the PUC's low-income telephone program and recent changes to the program. There are approximately 3.5 million customers enrolled in California's low-income program, now known as California LifeLine, which provides discounted telephone service to qualifying low-income consumers. This program was formerly known as Universal Lifeline Telephone Service or ULTS.

"I'm pleased to partner with the PUC to get the word out to consumers about this telephone program," said Assemblywoman Ma. "It's important that lower income consumers, as well as the elderly and disabled, know that there are state programs available to assist them with their telephone bills."

"This is a wonderful opportunity for the Commission to partner with Assemblywoman Ma to remind consumers to return the eligibility forms that are mailed to them in order to remain on or re-enroll in the California LifeLine program," said Commissioner Chong. "Consumers can also visit our new website, www.CalPhoneInfo.com, which is available in 12 different languages, for tips on how to shop for and be a wise consumer of phone services."

Every year, consumers who are enrolled in California LifeLine must show the PUC that they are eligible to remain on the program. This recertification process used to be done by the telephone companies, but as of July 2006 that task was assigned to a third-party company. As a result of this change, many consumers were confused about how to show their continuing eligibility for the program and some consumers were removed from the program.

Because of this confusion, on November 9, 2006, the Commission temporarily suspended the recertification process for up to six months to allow for time to correct the problem. Consumers who were removed from California LifeLine because they did not turn in their eligibility forms or did not return the forms on time are being placed back on California LifeLine service and their bills credited accordingly.

The PUC is also working to correct any problems for new customers that may be eligible for California Lifeline when they sign up for service. In addition, the PUC is working with telephone carriers and its third-party company to improve outreach materials and customer enrollment.

For more information on Assemblywoman Ma, please visit <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a12>.

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

###