BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS, in attendance

ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE THOMAS J. GLEGOLA, presiding

Application of Pacific Bell Telephone Company d/b/a/ AT&T for Targeted Relief from its Carrier of Last Resort Obligation and Certain Associated Tariff Obligations.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION HEARING Application 23-03-003

REPORTERS' TRANSCRIPT
Clovis, California
February 6, 2024
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ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE GLEGOLA: We are on the record. The Commission will come to order.

Today is February 6, 2024. This is the time and place for one of two public participation hearings on two proceedings being reviewed by the California Public Utilities Commission.

As I said while off the record, the first proceeding is A.23-03-002. This is the application of AT&T California to Withdraw its Eligible Telecommunications Carrier Designation; and the second proceeding is A.23-03-003, and this is the application of AT&T California to withdraw as a carrier of last resort for much of its service territory.

Today's public participation hearings or PPHs are being held at the Clovis City Council Chambers. I very much want to thank the City of Clovis for allowing us to use this room today.

I also want to make sure that any members of the public that wish to comment today know that they may comment on both proceedings when it is their time to speak.

My name is Thomas J. Glegola. I am the
assigned administrative law judge or ALJ assigned to
this proceeding. The honorable John Reynolds is the
assigned commissioner; and Commissioner Reynolds is with
us today.

Commissioner, do you have any opening remarks?

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: Yes. Thank you, Judge Glegola.

I would also like to thank the City of Clovis for allowing us to host this hearing here, and I want to offer my appreciation to everyone who spent valuable time from their days to come and share your -- your views and concerns with us about these two applications.

As you can all see, we have a very packed house. I appreciate that. Everyone will have a chance to communicate about these applications and their -- their impact. We are looking forward to hearing from all of you.

For all of your awareness, in addition to the two hearings we will be hosting today here in Clovis, we also have a virtual hearing on March 19th, which will be available on Admin Monitor and more information about that is available on our website. You can also participate via phone at that hearing, and we also have a docket card for both of these proceedings where you can file lengthier comments if you don't have time today.
to share everything that you'd like to; or if you have
friends or neighbors who are unable to attend today and
would like to share their views about these proceedings.

I am Commissioner John Reynolds, the assigned
commissioner to these two proceedings. I would like to
talk -- touch on these applications very briefly as we
get started and before we start hearing your
perspectives.

So, first a little bit about the California
Public Utilities Commission. We are the regulatory
agency for all of California's investor-owned public
utilities spanning across energy, water and
telecommunications industries.

The Commission is headed by five commissioners
with each commission serving six-year staggered terms.
As a commissioner, I am assigned to a wide variety of
cases including these two requests by AT&T.

What do these requests or applications really
mean? AT&T has come before the Commission asking for
two separate requests. First, we have the request to
relinquish their eligible telecommunications carrier
designation.

An eligible telecommunications carrier is a
telephone company that operates in a specific geographic
area that receives financial assistance from the Federal
Universal Service Fund to provide affordable telephone service to customers at all income levels.

AT&T is essentially requesting to no longer operate as an ETC in California.

Second, we have AT&T's request for relief from its carrier of last resort obligation and certain associated obligations.

Carrier of last resort, we sometimes refer to as COLR, so I may use carrier of last resort or COLR interchangeably.

A COLR is a telecommunications service provider that stands ready to provide basic telephone service, which is commonly landline cell phone service, to any customer requesting such service within a specified area.

AT&T is the designated COLR in many parts of the state and is the largest COLR in California. Where AT&T is the default basic telephone service provider, it must provide basic telephone service to any potential customer in that service territory.

When we talk about basic telephone service, I want to emphasize that this does not necessarily mean that your particular home phone service today is a basic service or that is provided by a landline copper or fiber-optic wireline. There are lots of different
technologies in use in telecommunications networks today. Your home phone service may, for example, be provided by a, what we call, voice over internet protocol, or VoIP.

The purpose of the public participation hearings at the Commission is to hear from customers or concerned Californians about proceedings before our agency.

Today's public comments, in addition to the comments made at all of the public participation hearings we will be holding over the next few weeks, will help us evaluate AT&T's requests in both cases.

It is crucial to our decision-making process that we hear from you all, and I want to thank members of the public again for attending this hearing.

Where are we in this case? After the public participation hearings, which will conclude on March 19th with that virtual hearing that I mentioned, Judge Glegola will hold evidentiary hearings at the Commission's San Francisco hearing rooms.

After evidentiary hearings, AT&T and other active parties to the case will file legal briefs. After that process, Judge Glegola will issue a proposed decision for the Commission to consider at one of its official voting meetings and our current schedule...
provides for that to happen later this year.

No decision has yet been made about AT&T's requests. AT&T has made its request, but no changes can occur without a vote on a proposed decision that is supported by the majority of the five commissioners.

With that, I am going to turn it back to Judge Glegola, and I look forward to hearing from you all.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you, Commissioner Reynolds.

So, as the commissioner said, my role as the assigned administrative law judge in this case is to review the application and evidence provided by the parties litigating this case, and based on that evidence, I will draft a proposed decision for the commissioners to consider. That will happen later this year.

I wanted to very briefly just talk about the standards for both cases. Whether an eligible telecommunications carrier may withdraw is determined by Federal Statute, and it's very specific, and if you're interested in it, it's 47 US Code Section 214(e), and it states in part that an eligible telecommunications carrier may withdraw its designation if other ETCs are able to serve all of their relinquishing customers and whether a carrier may withdraw, and how it does is
determined by Commission D.96-10-066; and AT&T was
designated a carrier of last resort by the California
Public Utilities Commission in 1996 as were many other
carriers. That D.96-10-066 was what adopted the rules.

If another COLR is not present in the service
territory of a COLR, as is the case here, AT&T must
apply to the Commission for permission to withdraw.
Also, part of this is the Commission must allow other
potential COLRs to bid on the opportunity to replace
AT&T.

So, if the CPUC grants AT&T's application --
again, only if it grants it. That hasn't happened --
AT&T then has the ability to withdraw service in any
community where its application is granted.

Both -- both applications are opposed. If you
would like more details about this application, there's
a -- you've probably seen a fact sheet back in the
lobby. You can also check it out online at
www.cpuc.ca.gov/PPH. You can find more information
about the positions of various parties in both places as
well.

Finally, AT&T should have mailed notice of
the -- its carrier of last resort application to all
landline customers, both those that rely on what we call
plain old telephone service and those that use voice
over internet protocol service.

So -- but before we have the evidentiary hearings that Commissioner Reynolds discussed, we want to hear from you. Your comments will help the CPUC gather information and determine whether to grant, reject or modify these applications.

In addition to considering any comments received here today, we also will consider all comments that have been submitted electronically or by other means in this proceeding. The last time I looked, we received over 1400 comments on AT&T's COLR application and over 450 on its ETC application.

So, if you -- again, if you would like to provide public comments today, please do so by signing on a sheet that is just outside in the lobby, and if you have a customer-specific question, or a question about your bill or something else of AT&T, there also is a representative of AT&T outside as well.

So, before I am done talking, I just want to go over some ground rules.

Court reporters will be transcribing everything that is said today. So, please remember to speak slowly and clearly, otherwise our court reporters will have a difficult job taking down everything that is said today.

Only one person at a time can speak as the
court reporters are unable to transcribe an accurate record when more than one person is speaking, and we will hear you best if you speak directly into the microphone at the podium over there.

To ensure we have an accurate record, it may be necessary for the court reporter or myself to interrupt you if we're not hearing you. Very much apologize for that, because none of us like doing that.

And if you are interested in the transcript, we will have one available after this hearing.

So, we are ready to start hearing from members of the public, and I would like to start with Sheriff Allan Kelzer.

Is Sheriff Kelzer in the room? You may begin, sir.

SPEAKER KELZER: Hi, good afternoon. My name is Allan Kelzer. I'm a sergeant with the sheriff's office. I am here on behalf of Sheriff John Zanoni.

Before I speak, I would like to allow the Public Information Officer to speak first and get some messages out to the public. That would be Tony Botti.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER BOTTI

All right. Thank you, Sergeant Kelzer.

Good afternoon, everyone. We have a good turnout here on a Tuesday afternoon.
I just want to first start by prefacing this: We are not here to take sides on the landline issue. We understand it's a controversial topic and many people enjoy their traditional service, so what we are here to talk about is that we are in favor of expanding technology throughout all of Fresno County. We need to get better wireless and broadband services to our residence all across the 6,000 square miles that our -- that our county is made up of.

We know that we have many areas in the foothills, the mountains, and then on the canyons on the west side, very spotty cell signals, internet signals, not only for people living out there, but for us as well as we are out doing our patrols.

We do have an ongoing partnership with AT&T. They provide us our cell phone service. We are actually FirstNet customers. It's a partnership we've enjoyed for several years now. What it basically does is it gives us priority service as first responders, so if signals were to go down, ours would hopefully be able to stay intact and give us the -- the priority not to jam up the lines, so that we can go out and perform rescues or evacuations or anything of that nature.

One of the big things that would help with getting the broadband-to-fiber cell phone towers, things
of that nature, into some of the more rural areas that aren't, you know, enjoying that right now is that we could get emergency alerts out to all of you especially when we are talking about fires, and we are talking about floods. We have an Everbridge program. I don't know how many of you in the room are familiar with that.

I would encourage you that if you are not signed up for Everbridge, to go to the website as fresnosherriff.org, you will see an Everbridge logo on there. You can sign up for free. You put in your information, your name, whatever phone number you would like to be connected or contacted by along with your email. That is going to allow us, in the event of an emergency, to push out a message directly to you so you can get real-time information to make decisions that are best for you and your family's safety.

Social media is another aspect that we have utilized, of course, because many people follow us on different things like Next Door, Facebook, Instagram Twitter -- now X -- all of these types of things. It's another avenue for us to push information out to you, and if you don't have, you know, good service -- I am sure most all of us have cell phones -- but when you're out and about and something major comes in, you want to be able to receive that message. I mean, the worst
thing that we can think of is that somebody gets injured
or loses their life, because they couldn't get a message
quick enough.

In 2024, we rely on wireless technology in
order to communicate with the public as quickly as
possible.

So, from that standpoint, we at the Sheriff's
Office and Sheriff Zanoni do support expanding
technology throughout the 6,000 square miles of Fresno
County, again, to communicate with the residents and
make them as safe as possible.

Thank you. Now I will defer to Sergeant Alan
Kelzer.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER KELZER

Thank you, Tony. Once again, my last name is
spelled K-e-l-z-e-r, and I'm a sergeant with the Fresno
County Sheriff's Office. I have been on for 21 years
now, and we know that -- a lot of residents in the
county know that the County of Fresno is no stranger to
natural disasters -- fires, floods, the heavy rains that
we are getting -- we got a lot last year -- snowstorms
and so forth.

So, like what Tony was mentioning earlier, it's
been beneficial to get those emergency services out to
you in the most convenient way for you as possible.
Working the western part of the county, working up in the mountain areas, and working in the metro areas -- I've worked every single area in Fresno County -- and a lot of our job is driven based off of technology and wireless capabilities, so we -- about this -- this last week, for example, we handled over 3,000 calls for service. 1500 of those -- or a little around that number -- were dispatch calls.

Our staff uses a lot of different applications. We have units such as Search and Rescue, SWAT, Vice, and they use a lot of different search engines and web-based applications to do their jobs, and we really rely on that.

In the emergency aspect of things, we deal a lot with -- up in the mountains, we deal with lost hikers. We deal with injured hikers. We deal with the natural disasters that I mentioned earlier and getting in communication with those people, reaching out to them either physically or through telecommunication means is -- is vital; and we just want to, you know, make sure that we continue to improve the -- the communication between the community and us regardless of what areas they're in.

So, thank you.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you very much, Sergeant
So, with that, could we have three people line up? Given the number of people that we have speaking, I am going to ask if folks could limit their comments to one minute just so that we can get everybody, otherwise, as you can imagine, we will be here for -- I don't even know how long.

So, with that next up is Russ Peterson, followed by Marlita Berilla, and then Barbara Yorgan. And I apologize if I mispronounce any names.

I have got one, too, so I am -- I am trying to the best I can.

Sir, please go ahead.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER PETERSON

As he said, my name is Russ Petersen. We live down in Kern County about 30 miles northeast of Bakersfield. A very rural area. No cell phone service, which is the important thing for EMS purposes. Coincidentally, Sunday at about 1:00 our landline went down. We are still waiting for it to come up. They said it might come up by Thursday at 10:00 p.m.

That's not very good service from AT&T by the way. That's how I feel about it.

There are many people out there that rely on landline service. There are no cell phone companies
that have displayed any interest in putting towers up. They can't justify the expense for the people that live there. There is -- T-Mobile, on their map, shows that we are in an area that we can receive. We aren't, so the maps that you see aren't necessarily accurate.

So, I -- I think my name is about up. So, I -- we are asking that we have some type of service, and I noticed the ETC can take over if AT&T pulls out, so I would like to know if -- what your -- if any of these ETC companies have shown an interest in taking over what AT&T has been doing?

Thank you.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER YORGANJIAN

My name --

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

SPEAKER YORGANJIAN: -- is Barbara Yorganjian.

There are huge health hazards in relation to cell phones, enormous health hazards. Okay. My most immediate concern is human tracking, the spyware. And the world is getting into all this spyware, because they want to monitor our motions; where we go, what we do, what we say. I mean people can't walk without having a cell phone around, and it picks it up, and the next thing you know, they're getting actually what we talked about.
I really object to this. It's a violation of my freedom, it's undemocratic, and unconstitutional. I do not want to be monitored. It's nobody's business where I go, what I do, how I talk on my -- in my home. The health hazards are enormous. They have found ten times more bacteria in cell phones than on toilet seats, and E. coli, staph, and more human fungi viruses. You don't have that on a landline phone. And medical facilities, it's a huge hazard.

How did we ever live without this before? I think that's what we need to ask. People ask me, "How do you live without a cell phone?" I have for decades. We had emergency services and communication before. This is an addiction. And the amount of money that the industry pays -- 18 billion on ads worldwide, 18 million to political contributions to Congress -- and not a single risk is mentioned in their ads; not one. There are so many hazards associated with this. And people are comfortable in their comfort zone, and they don't want to hear how bad this is. How do you treat an addict? This is cell phone addiction.

And so -- but, my huge concern is not only the health aspects, but my privacy. I don't want to be tracked, and this is part of human tracking. So I want my landline phone. I don't want to be without it.
(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you very much.

Could we have Barbara Yorganjian?

SPEAKER YORGANJIAN: That was me.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Oh, that was you. Thank you.

Could we then have -- we have -- the next three are Rian (sic) Garren, Joann Caufield, and Margaret Billia (sic).

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER GARREN

My name is Brian Garren.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Okay. Please continue, Mr. Garren.

SPEAKER GARREN: You were close.

I have a landline. I've had it for -- well, forever, actually, but mostly because it's the most reliable service we have. Right? I used to live in Madera Ranchos, and spotty cell service, at best. I -- and --

(Reporter clarification.)

SPEAKER GARREN: So I was saying, I -- I have a landline. We've had it for -- mainly, because it works. It's -- it's -- it's an emergency phone. It's connected to many devices in our home, medical devices. And it -- if the power goes out, it still works. And cell service is -- is -- is spotty, even in Madera Ranchos, where we
lived. So I would -- I'd appreciate continuing to -- to
have a landline, just for safety reasons.

And -- and I'd like to ask the question, as --
as the first gentleman asked, who is going to take over
if AT&T pulls out? There's no mention of anybody even
interested in -- in being out there with us. And -- and
I know in our area, they won't give us any fiber, and
they're not interested in putting cell towers in out
there, just because we're such a small community. So
they bypassed us.

So that's my comment. Thank you.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Could we have our
next speaker, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER CAUFIELD

Hi. I'm Joann Caufield, and I live in cattle
country up by Watts Valley Road, acres and acres. I'm
alone. My closest neighbor is not even close.

So last year, my -- I had a stroke. The
landline saved my life. How did it save my life? Cell
service doesn't work. I had one bar. To use the cell
service at my house, you have to go down my driveway
half mile and out a half mile out on Watts Valley Road.
Then you get cell service.

Also, I have ClearCaptions. I'm hard of
hearing. ClearCaptions works through my landline. So
without my landline, I mean I have no -- who -- who --
how do I call? If I had another stroke, what do I do?
You know, can't run out in the middle of the road when
you're having a stroke, and down a half a mile. So I'm
really concerned. I've been alone for 27 years up
there, and like I say, my -- my closest neighbor's not
close. It's a few miles down the road. So, you know,
I -- I'm -- I'm at a loss. I can't believe that they
could do this to us, and get away with it. So that's
where I'm at.

(Applause.)

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER BILLALBA

Hi. My name is Margaret Billalba,
B-i-l-l-a-l-b-a.

Most of my points have been spoken to already,
but one of the things that I'm -- I'm concerned about is
the taxes that we've paid on all of the -- the work
that's been done over the years. Now, we've had our
landline since 1961. But, the -- what happens to all of
the fiber-optics, all of the landline, all of the -- the
wiring and everything that's been put in? Who's going
to pay the taxes on that stuff? Is it going to be used,
will it be sold, used by another carrier? Has another
carrier even shown any interest in stepping up and
taking the place of the services that AT&T has been
providing?

And I, again, live in the country. Every time
a pregnant bird lands on the line, the -- the line will
go out for a -- a particular time. And so, anyway,
excuse me, please.

When the power is out, PG&E calls. They let us
know what's happening, how many homes are involved, and
how long they expect the outage to be; and then there
are updates. Also, when something happens, we can
always reach 911, we can call PG&E.

The cell phone service is not always reliable.
Last summer, I called and inquired about this. And not
to paint everyone with the same brush, but the -- the
gentleman from AT&T told me "Look, lady. You need to
get with it. These days, everything is a cell phone,
and you need to -- you need to learn all of these
things, and put your life in -- in the hands of the cell
phone service." That's bologna. That's bologna. You
lose your phone, you've lost -- if you -- if you've tied
your life to your phone, and somehow, the -- the phone
disappears, is misplaced, stolen, whatever it happens to
be, you're sunk, you know.

This is a basic service, and being able to
contact someone on an emergency basis is just one of the
basic fundamental things that we need to be able to do.
This country is not flat. There's a -- our topography is not flat. And he -- this -- this man actually told me "You don't understand. This is what the shareholders want." Because I asked him "Where did this come from?" And he said that the shareholders have decided they want more money, and this is a good way to eliminate -- to achieve that, by eliminating this service.

I do -- do not agree in any way, shape, or form. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you for sharing your thoughts.

Before we continue, I just wanted to -- because a couple people have made this comment, I wanted to let you know that one of the requirements on -- on the Commission is to provide notice to other potential replacements, and ask if they're interested. That notice hasn't gone out yet. It will be. I'm the one sending it.

And so the answer is, at this point, I don't know whether anybody will apply to -- to replace AT&T. But, that's -- that's going to be one of the questions that we have to look at. That's going to be a pretty important piece of evidence. So just wanted to throw that out there.
Could we please have the next three people line up to speak? First one is Steve Duty, the next one is Dixie Phillips, and the last one is Chuck Kolbert.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER DUTY

All right. So I'm Steve Duty. I'm a maintenance troubleshooter for AT&T, and I'm representing CWA right now.

As I look over the room right now, I see my customers; mostly elderly, rural. Okay? That is me. That's what I take care of.

I think that we, as a business, are looking at money rather than taking care of our customers.

(Applause.)

SPEAKER DUTY: Doesn't mean that -- that we, as technicians, that's all we're looking at.

What I'm getting at is, yeah, we're pushing for better coverage, cell-wise. But, the problem here isn't -- it's not the cell service. It's -- it's that these people can't get cell service where most of them are. So in order for us to take care of them, emergency-wise, most of them are for emergency. That's why they have them; and for family. Can't tell you guys how many times family will get in touch with us and ask us, "Hey, did you -- did you see my parent?" "Yes. Yes, I did. They're okay. You can call them now. We
got it." I know that we are behind on a lot of these rural, and we're doing the best we can to keep up, because we're very very busy.

But, I don't -- I don't want to see landlines go away. Don't know of any company out there, honestly, that can take over the footprint that we take care of, and be able to maintain it. I don't know of any. And I've been here a long time. So just -- I'm pushing for you guys, too, and -- and I really hope you guys do the right thing to take care of our people. And I don't -- our elderly -- hey, we're all going to be there; so remember that.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Could we get our next comment?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER PHILLIPS

Thank you. Good afternoon. This -- my name is Dixie Phillips.

And my first thought is in what way do we, the people, benefit from what AT&T wants to do?

And number two is who maintains the lines that are already up there, telephone poles and the lines and stuff? And when we do have a storm or a flood and a fire, who are we going to call to come out and maintain those lines?
And second, I like having a landline. I can plug it in in several places in my house so that, if I'm in the bedroom, in the patio, whatever, I still have a landline out there, in case I do have an emergency. And I don't have to plug in my landline to recharge it, like I constantly would have to do with my cell phone; and you look at it, and also, it's like you need to recharge it.

So unfortunately, my family's, like -- like they said, addicted to their cell phones. And my grandson even has a job where he's head of a computer cell phone department. But, they still call me on my landline, which I do want to continue.

And who's going to take over? I mean are they going to offer us the same service? My bill from one month to another goes up. It never goes down. Nothing ever goes down; see it where we go everywhere. So does that mean that they're going to make the bill so high on our landline that we just get to the point where we have to choose between other bills or eating to have a landline?

These are some of my concerns. Thank you.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Can we please have our next commenter?
STATEMENT OF SPEAKER KOLBERT

My name is Chuck Kolbert. I live up near Humphreys Station, or Blasingame Fire Station, for those of you in the foothills.

My biggest concern is, if AT&T goes away, we have no emergency phone line to call. Our cell phones do not work at our house. We tried AT&T before they put a tower in across the street on one of your officer's property. It's an AT&T line, but I'm not going to change back to AT&T, because I had such bad service from them before from the cell phone.

The landline, at one point, Ponderosa was interested in buying, if that helps you, your Honor, for that area up there around the foothills. They put in fiber-optics within a half a mile of our house, and they were looking to buy some of the -- AT&T's lines, and they wouldn't sell them.

Anyway, my thing is is cell service is not going to be an option up there for 30 years, 'til they get enough towers on every other corner to cover the cell -- cell phones. You can call me all day long on my cell phone, and I get -- does not ring at my house; there's no -- no way, nowhere on my property, except down -- near down the front gate, which is about 800 feet away, that my cell phone will ring. I can
text, but I can't send a picture or make a call.

Anyway, I'm for keeping the AT&T lines and forcing them to upgrade and do whatever they need to do to make it work right. Thank you.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Could we have the following three people up: First is Richard Herstein; next is Carol Nalbandian; and the next is Mildred Anderson.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER HERSTEIN

Thank you. My name is Richard Herstein. I'm a retired AT&T employee. I spent 17 years as a maintenance splicer doing repair work up and down this valley.

As being a -- inside with AT&T, right now, they're putting the cart before the horse. We all know technology is going to keep advancing. But, right now, AT&T wants to sell you on the "A" phone -- the cell phone service without providing that service. That doesn't make a whole lot of sense, folks. They need to get their facilities out there for you before they would say, "Oh, we want to do away with copper."

Well, even if they do do away with copper, the downside of that is there is no other company in this world that can replace the service that they're giving
you now, because they -- there is no other company
geared up to cover this much area in California that
AT&T provides service to now. And some of you know that
AT&T doesn't have the best landline service in the
world, at times, especially with the weather, but they
do their best to get it to you as quick as they can;
because I know about that, because I did that for years.

So AT&T needs to think about this, and the
Commission needs to think about who's going to try and
replace it, because it's going to be hard to get a
replacement. Thank you.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Can we hear from our
next commenter, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER NALBANDIAN

Hi. My name is Carol Nalbandian. And I don't
have much of a speech prepared, because frankly, I just
found out about this from the notices that they sent us
and an article in the newspaper.

And I live in the city, so frankly, I don't
have any problems. And I do love my landline, but I'm
not hooked to the hip with my cell phone. And I think
that most of the other people have said pretty much what
I could have thought of.

And my first thought, when I got this notice,
is why is AT&T doing this? Well, money, I'm sure, is the problem. They're probably not making enough money on their landlines, so they're going to try to see if they can figure out a way that they can get rid of the landlines, and put something else in there, and charge everybody more.

But, my -- my other thought is, if they're getting subsidies from the government right now to put in -- to do the landlines, what are they going -- are they going to have to give us money back, are they going to keep the money, are they going to keep getting more money? It's just -- like I said, I don't know hardly anything about it. But, my other thought is, if they're receiving subsidy -- whatever it is, millions, billions of dollars -- to do this, why aren't they like contractors, building contractors, who get government money, have to provide a certain percentage of, say, low-income? So why wouldn't they at least be required to provide a certain percentage of landlines?

And just one last thing: I was reading this notice that they sent to us, and it says here something about the existing transitional landline phone customers for at least six months after the PUC approves the application. So they already think they have it in the bag.
(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Can we have our next three commenters? First is Mildred Anderson. Next is Carolyn Wong, and next is Mark Fletcher.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER ANDERSON

I'm Mildred Anderson, and my questions have been responded to.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you for much. For the court reporters, please -- please note that Mildred Anderson said that others have said the same thing that she planned to say. Sorry.

Could we have our next commenter, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER WONG

My name is Carolyn Wong from Tulare, California.

I, too, have been called "old school" by AT&T by a representative from San Diego, and I am proud to be old school. I have my Princess line telephone plugged into the side of my bedroom --

(Applause.)

SPEAKER WONG: -- I have been around for quite a long time. My son lives in Washington D.C., and my other one lives four hours away from me, so that landline is really important to me in case of an emergency.
If we have a natural disaster, I can grab my little telephone, and I don't have to fumble with my cell phone, unlocking it, trying to get to a keyboard to call 9-1-1; and time matters, especially when someone is breaking into your house, which happened to me.

I called the police department before I came here, and I asked them fairly, I said, "In case of an emergency, a 9-1-1 call, which call do you receive faster, the landline or the cell phone line?" He said, "Even though the cell phone lines have improved, the landline. I have a direct contact, and I can pinpoint exactly where you're at."

I think we all know, as we get a certain age, time is important, especially strokes being our age; and so, things -- it's very important.

And AT&T -- if you -- AT&T is always trying to force you into -- I think I am saying this right -- a VoIP line. All those lines are connected to electricity. So, if they go down -- if the electricity goes down, they go down, and you have no way of contacting anybody; and at our age, we want to contact our loved ones right off the bat, and if we have no -- if my cell phone goes down, I cannot contact anybody but I can go to the Princess line or my wireless line and get ahold of somebody, 9-1-1 or whatever. And AT --
there's no comparable communication device except a
landline, because it still works when the electricity
goes out. It still works, and all those other
alternatives that AT&T tries to force on us goes out.

And my alarm company, if they change over, I
have to rewire my alarm system because mine is connected
to my landline, and then I get another charge for
another box that I have to get for $15 a month. And
it's not like the cell service that I get from AT&T is
perfect. If it was 100 percent perfect every single
time -- clarity -- I don't get the back talk when you're
talking. I have to walk around my house like this, "Can
you hear me now? Can you hear me now?" I walk -- I
literally walk all through my house. I get all my
10,000 steps in sometimes walking around trying to get
them --

(Applause.)

SPEAKER WONG: -- because I still get lousy
service even though they're putting towers in, so it's
not dependable; and I think part of it also is age
discrimination, because if you look around here, like
the gentlemen said, we are all a certain age. When you
get that age and you go -- all -- all you young guys
will be at that age, too -- you want to be able to call
somebody in an emergency, and it's -- it's traumatic for
us. We're not born -- I wasn't born during technology.  
I had a typewriter with correction tape, and -- you  
know, so I think I'm doing pretty darn good with my cell  
phone but, you know, there's a lot of us. At 88 years  
old, my mom was told, when she was alive, to like,  
"well, just go on the internet and find it." We are not  
cured that way, and there's a lot of us.  

I really think part of this is age  
discrimination. It's about money. They don't want --  
their excuse is that they want to take care of these  
copper lines. They get plenty of money, and -- and the  
other thing is these -- these VoIP lines, they're not  
regulated; and so, they can just do -- when they switch  
us all over, they can just do whatever they want and  
raise the price with no accountability, and I think it's  
wrong.  

So, I really hope that you don't allow them to  
do that.  

Thank you.  

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Can we have our next  
commenter, please?  

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER FLETCHER  

Yes, I'm Mark Fletcher, and I am speaking on  
behalf myself and my mother. She lives in a community  
called Kings Mountain. It's in the Santa Cruz
mountains. It is a very rural community. They do have
a volunteer fire department, but -- and there is -- the
volunteer fire department asked to have cell phone
service put in, so they did put a tower there. It is a
Verizon tower; however, you can't even get Verizon
service there for them to -- to handle these emergency
calls.

I am -- it's an area where when there's wind,
the trees come down, they take out lines. It is
expensive to have a phone line there, a landline, but I
am very concerned that they may just say, we are not
going to do landlines here at all, and then what do you
do? How do you communicate? My name is 90 years old.
She needs to be in communication with her doctors. If
there's an emergency, you -- you have to call. Even
though there's a volunteer fire department, you need to
call 9-1-1, and if there's no landline, you can't
respond.

So, I urge you to -- to not allow this.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you very much.

Our next three commenters are Verna Dobrinin,
Kevin Miller and Erin Pectol.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER DOBRININ

I'm Verna Dobrinin and mine -- most of mine
have been answered.

Thank you.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Could we have our next commenter then, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER MILLER

Hi, my name is Kevin Miller. I'm the District Director of Enterprise and Architecture for State Center Community College District, serve about 70,000 students -- Fresno, Madera, Tulare and Kings County. I am also the board chair for the Fresno Coalition for Digital Inclusion working on digital access for all of our residents in the region.

I think everybody here today has covered, much better than I can, the issues around public safety, particularly in rural areas where -- where cell service is not adequate or reliable, but I want to draw attention to some of the other residents that are poorly served by this, and that is our urban poorer and areas of high density and historical underinvestment. Cell service in those areas is -- is quite poor as well. You can take a driving tour and areas of affluence have way more bars than areas that do not; and so, that is a challenge.

I think other commenters have mentioned about location services working much better, obviously, on --
on their POTS lines. They know exactly what your
address is, and not necessarily quite so accurate with
-- with mobile services.

The other issue that I wanted to draw attention
to is because of the universal service requirement
around COLR, we know a -- kind of an unintended
consequence of that is DSL has become internet of last
resort for many of our residents. Throughout areas of
underinvestment, places without fiber, if you're within
10,000 feet or so of the central office, you can get
DSL. Many of our students are still using DSL. Exiting
the copper market means they have no internet, and as we
look at the FFA applications of various processes that
CPUC is running around grants and subsidies for
investments, these areas are not necessarily getting the
applications that they need to replace it with modern
fiber services, and that is really concerning to remove
service before we replace it with something better.

Thank you.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Can we have our next commenter, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER PECTOL

So, my name is Erin Pectol, I'm the area
manager for AT&T Design Engineering Group. I have the
responsibility from down in Tulare County all the way up
to San Jose County up through Stockton area, so.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can't hear you back here.

SPEAKER PECTOL: So, what my team is responsible for is we design -- along with our construction counterparts, we design all of the AT&T new infrastructure throughout the valley. The two most common questions that we always receive from our -- from either the commercial and residential developers and also our customers is, "Do we have fiber?" And if not, "When are we going to get it?"

So, as a customer of AT&T and a local resident, I mean, I understand the concern for, you know, the broadband services that we -- that we provide. AT&T is committed to providing those types of services, so that is basically what -- what I am here to say.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Our next commenters are Sherry Cruz, Eric Johnson and Rita McPeters.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER CRUZ

All right. So, I am with the Fresno Center. We are a nonprofit in Fresno. I am representing the inner city area of Fresno, so I am sensitive to those that may be on the outlier areas, but forgive me for some of what I might say may not be in line with your
issues.

With that being said, the Fresno Center supports AT&T's ongoing effort in providing high-speed internet and wireless connection to the residents and communities of the Fresno County region, and we particularly have an interest in our youth, which I know are in not represented here today, they are probably in school. Have we had some youth here, we might hear some different opinions about the need for high-speed internet and access, so that they can get their homework done, so that they have access at home to also provide to their parents, or the parents can access the school portal that they can then find out what is going on in the school system, help their children with their homework and access online tools and tutoring support.

We do support the modernization efforts including moving away from old copper network to modern and high speed fiber and wireless connectivity. Local community organizations like us are also able to provide that supportive education for those who need to learn how to access Wi-Fi and provide education and services at our center working alongside the community college and school districts, so that those who are not sure how to access and use not only their cell phone, we are talking about laptops, Google and having access to
information that can also save your lives in
emergencies. That we would be there to provide that
support on the ground, and there are other programs and
services in our community that are not being discussed
today that can provide education, support, technical
support, so all folks can have that access to learning
the things that they may be afraid of at this time,
because it still feels so new for some. But for our
youth, this is essential for our parents, this is
essential so that they can go on with their high school
and, hopefully, access college experience, so that we
have well-informed, adjusted young people who are able
then to pay taxes and contribute to our community as
employees that are employed.

So, this is where we are standing on this, and
we want to also provide our support to AT&T to utilize
our center for any services that can also help move this
along so people aren't as fearful and have the support
that they need.

Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Boo.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Can we have our next
commenter, please?

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: And everyone,
please try to -- try to keep to the allotted time, if
possible. We do want to hear from everyone in the room, and we don't want folks to have to wait and -- and be here longer than they need to be to be able to make their comments.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER JOHNSON

Good afternoon. My name is Eric Johnson. I live here in Clovis. I want to thank the PUC for providing this forum here today.

I'm a businessperson by background. I'm an AT&T retiree. I'm also an advocate for education. Providing communities -- similar to what the previous speaker talked about, providing communities with access to the best available technology is critical to today, those students and their families being able to compete in today's economy and also, really to succeed in today's world at large with all the issues going around.

The more dollars that are spent on older technology, in fact, are that many fewer dollars that are spent on bringing in the new technologies; and in bringing in new technologies, expanding them, being able to resolve some of the issues that have been brought out here today, as such, I would simply consider that -- that the PUC approve the applications that have been brought forth today by AT&T.

Thank you.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Shame on you, sir.

Shame on you.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Can we have our next commenter, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER MCPETERS

My name is Rita McPeters, and I'm in the area where AT&T is planning on taking our service out and that is the whole area of Zip code 93706. It's bad enough we don't get good service on everything else, but the point is, there's a lot of older people that live in my area. We do not want the cell phones because cell phone is unreliable, and just like the lady said, when you have a cell phone, you have to keep it charged up at all times; and that internet service that they had, it don't work as well either. So, don't tell me about how good the internet is for that area. It is not that good.

I will say, I have had that line -- landline for a long, long time, and I love it because I can always depend on it. When I had to use my cell phone, I had so much problems trying to get in touch with AT&T when there was a problem and it went down. I spent up all my time on the cell phone, and I lost out on the money that I had to go back and charge and put more money on my cell phone.
So, cell phones, I don't like them. They're not good, and they're not good for your brain either.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Before we continue, I just want to check. I do see some people standing. Are there -- is anybody standing that wants a seat? Because I -- there are some seats that are, I think, available but, if not, we can -- we can get some more. We can just -- you know, we can -- there's obviously seats that we can break down. But on the other hand, I -- I have been told that 165 people have -- are -- are -- have taken time today, so that's -- that's pretty appreciative. Well, we appreciate that.

Our next -- our next three commenters are Matias Bombal, Gayla Mott, and Greg Mott.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER BOMBAL

Good afternoon, your Honor, Commissioner.

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Matias Bombal and I'm a broadcaster; and I just want to say, this is not just an issue in rural areas, as far as keeping landline service and both items on this agenda today. I drove here from Sacramento to be here today. Where, in a major city and the capitol of our state, we had a storm that knocked out power for two days, and I was
only able to reach my uncle via my 1928 Western Electric
rotary dial phone still connected to a POTS system on a
copper line.

(Applause.)

SPEAKER BOMBAL: Because the power was out, I
couldn't charge the phone, trees had blocked access to
my car -- luckily didn't lose it -- so I couldn't charge
the phone in the car showing you that the AT&T great
POTS system is still valuable and vital at times of
emergency not to mention privacy.

Now, as a broadcaster, we have been discussing
this issue quite a bit in Sacramento radio, and we had a
fascinating call from a 9-1-1 operator in Rocklin,
California. I won't read her whole note, it would take
90 seconds, but just -- she -- she intimates that a
landline will connect you to a specific address. Once
in a very blue moon is the address wrong. It's almost
always right, and that is really important because the
VoIP phones go over internet protocols, and you don't
really know where that call is coming from. The
operator has to ask where are you?

In the event that someone is having a stroke or
a heart attack, and they pick up that landline, they
know where the address is, and those operators are
trained to listen carefully in the background if there
is no response; and so, it is important.

I urge the PUC not to let AT&T shirk their responsibility.

I thank you.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Can we please have our next commenter?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER GAYLA MOTT

My name is Gayla Mott. I live in Pollock Pines, California. Thank you for the opportunity for public comment on AT&T's two applications.

The two requests made by AT&T strike a sense of alarm in one's mind. For California residents who live in rural areas, the specter is daunting. The coverage maps of the cell phone servers reveal -- reveals the widespread areas of impact for the abandonment of the current obligations for AT&T in California.

The power of our Bay Area home was buried, so there was no loss of power to our home there. Upon retirement to Pollock Pines, losses of our power have occurred but our home had telephone service when every other electrical device was unusable.

One winter, the neighborhood power was out as a result of a snow tomorrow. A PG&E employee working on restoring power asked to use the landline to make a call

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION, STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
since his cell phone was unable to receive an adequate signal. Landline service is still necessary.

While many households have provided themselves with other telephone service, the -- for many, the costs of those programs is prohibitive especially when on a fixed retirement income. Landline service is still affordable.

In recent a Wall Street Journal crossword puzzle, the given clue was: "AT&T guarantee of retro service," the correct answer was: "The promised landline."

We, and many others, sincerely hope the promised landline will be an actual guaranteed service even though it is retro technology. The safety of rural California residents relies on it.

Thank you for your time.

(Appause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Could we have our next commenter, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER GREGORY MOTT

Yes. My name is Gregory Mott. I'm also from Pollock Pines. If you're not aware where that is, it's the -- one of the last places to put on your chains, if there's heavy snow. We're east of Placerville, California, and we drove down from there this morning,
and we'll go back there.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you.

SPEAKER G. MOTT: The reason I want to speak -- and I -- I appreciate everything that everyone else has said. That's -- that's exactly the problem. I appreciate the comment of the Sheriff's sergeant.

As soon as we moved up there, we -- we made a decision to move. We knew there'd be changes in our life, but we did not worry about a lack of phone service. There were two -- two landlines into this person's house that we bought, so that wasn't even a question.

As soon as I got up there, I got involved in community emergency response team, which is a -- Federal Government. The Sheriff's Department trained us for emergency service to our area, and in the course of doing that was -- I learned that -- the problem in the areas, which I already knew; the geography is such that radio signals do not bend. They don't bend around corners. They don't bend over ridges. And so, it was necessary, not too long before I moved up there in 2005, for an individual to build a number of repeater stations on the mountaintops so that the first responders had a way to communicate down into the canyons and all over. And I knew this from my work with a radio station that
had the same problem in Southern California. They could hear us out at sea, but the people down at the bottom of the mountain couldn't hear the signal.

Safety: We were evacuated for the Caldor Fire for 11 days. We were evacuated, and we got most of the things with us that we thought we might need, if something terrible happened, because we received a call on our landline alerting us to that possibility. No cell phone at our house, service at all, so it was -- it was no point. We have one flip phone that we carry with us when we leave home.

Thank you, and I appreciate all the other comments over there, and I support the -- the opinion to not grant these applications.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Because I do see a couple people standing, I just wanted to point out that there are some seats over on this side, this -- just in case folks -- folks want to sit.

Our next three commenters are Sheila Otteson, Patricia Williams, and Shawn Heape.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER OTTESON

My name is Sheila Otteson, and I hope you will not go ahead with granting AT&T's proposals. But, in the event that you do, I have some concerns.
I'm very concerned about the maintenance and disposition of outdoor plant, if AT&T stops provision of landline service. This includes aerial and underground service. Perhaps you need to direct AT&T to establish a fund to repair or remove poles, cable, and telephone lines, if they're not purchased by another agency. Examples of cases that might need repair, removal, or remediation are the telephone cables that came detached from poles at the corner of Clovis Avenue and Jensen Avenue, south of Fresno, in December of last year. The sighting lines appear to block portions of the intersection traffic and a business driveway. We've received news that on -- State Highway 132 was closed due to 41 falling telephone poles with their attached cables.

This should not be a problem for -- for our taxpayers and our local depart -- I can't -- public work department to take care of. I hope the "A" -- the CPUC require AT -- AT&T, if they abandon these services, to supply appropriate -- an appropriate entity their maps of all their facilities, its underground facility locations, and an inventory of the equipment and facilities in place in areas it chooses to withdraw service.

I'm also concerned that they -- we may need to
somehow -- you may need to set up a system so that the Underground Service Alert can mark these facilities, as needed.

I'm a landline customer of AT&T, and I rely on it for its reliability during emergencies and power outages. Just about a week or two weeks ago, our Internet was out for over 24 hours. So that would eliminate the Voice over -- VoIP. Until just recently -- I live in Fresno, but until just recently, we did not have more than one bar of cell service. The sound quality on the landlines are so much better than through cell phone or cell phone to cell phone. Really, you need to think about quality of this old technology. It has its uses. Thank you.

(Appause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Could we have our next commenter, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER WILLIAMS

My name is Patricia Williams. My husband and I live in Clovis, and we've been AT&T customers for many many years.

We appreciate very much you allowing us to come and make our comments, and I think, if you see nothing else, you see a sea of people who have come out on a Tuesday afternoon; and I dare say, 95 percent of them
are asking you, are pleading with you, not to allow AT&T
to take away our landline service.

   My husband is hearing impaired. He has hearing
aids, and they are Bluetoothed connected to a cell
phone; but unfortunately, most of the time, he does not
hear well on a mobile phone. He also has many health
problems. And I'm a nurse, but I'm not going to be
there every -- every second of every day. And my
concern is, if I'm out of the house, and he has some
kind of an urgent need, and there's no landline, how is
he to call and actually be able to communicate with
anyone on his mobile phone?

   I don't recall the name of the gentleman who
said that the old technology needs to give way to new
technology. And I would dare say that that implies that
perhaps new generations should take over for old
generations, and I am appalled at that kind of
inference.

   (Applause.)

   SPEAKER WILLIAMS: I -- I appreciate so much
all the comments that the people have made, and I think,
if nothing else, you know that we're passionate about
asking you not to grant AT&T the ability to take away
our landlines. Thank you very much.

   (Applause.)
ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Could we have our next commenter, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER HEAPE

Hello. My name is Shawn Heape. I'm with CWA, Communication Workers of America. We also work at AT&T. We also represent the people of Frontier.

Frontier bought a bunch of bad landlines that went upside down, and they are a rich company. Who's going to buy us? How are they going to represent these people here?

I'm once a young kid. I'm 50. I'm injured all over the place. Right? I need my landline in order to reach somebody in a rural area.

I also represent people in Lake Pillsbury. You're going to go next to Mendocino. Those folks will be there to talk about it. They don't even have power. They're running off of a generator, for crying out loud. And now, what are they going to do? They have no cell sites up there. They have copper running through the lake that they can call 911 when they need help. And not to mention, it's a dirt road. It takes an hour and a half to get down there; and if there's storms and stuff, it's helicopters. These are people, like they are here today, that are here to tell you please reconsider.
One last question: What happened when DSL came in back in 1999 when a majority of the people were hired from these companies, because that was a big deal, DSL for all these people? Long distance companies wanted to get into that, and they were told we'll leave no child blind -- behind on long -- on -- on the DSL, if we let them get into long distance. What happened?

And I want to remind one more thing. Assembly Bill 3295 was a big deal. That was just in 2016. All the phone companies wanted to get on (sic) landlines then. I've worked specifically with President Picker and Commissioner Sandoval stopping that from happening; not just for the jobs, because I'm a job person. I'm a lineman for the county. I spent two days without going to sleep clearing trees, trying to get these cell sites and dial tones back up for you people out in the community. And we're not done. We have a lot of work to do together.

So hopefully, you could partner with us, and come up with some solutions for these people to continue to have dial tone, to continue to have services for all these children in underdeveloped areas.

And I'm part of that. I live in Clearlake, California. I drove here today to help you from Clearlake, California.
And I'll see you again soon. Thank you.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Just wanted to mention, if you have not spoken, and you want to, it would be very helpful if you put your name on the list that is outside. Just -- that way, I'm -- I'm seeing it a lot quicker, and we know who's speaking, we know how to spell their names. I may not know how to pronounce some names, but I'll apologize for that, and probably individually, as well, if I can.

Our next three speakers are Tom Kounas, Peggy Bissell, and Ivy Nannini.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER KOUNAS

Hi. My name is Tom Kounas. I'm a California consumer. I have cell phones with multiple service providers. I have three in my pocket right now. I support the new technology; but, I also support the old technology. And we -- just as we get new technology, we shouldn't remove the old technology.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Thank you.

SPEAKER KOUNIS: I subscribe to POTS landline telephone services, and landlines are a necessity. They're not a luxury.

I'm highly recommending requesting that the California Public Utility Commissions (sic) deny the
pending application from any incumbent telephone company in California that requests ending the obligation of the state's carrier of last resort. There are many disadvantages for landline customers if the carrier of the last resort is abolished. There should be no partial and no total COLR relief. All Californians must have access to landline plain old telephone service, also known as POTS. Californians and regulators, like the CPUC, are here to protect all telephone customers, and help resolve disputes, if they are not able to resolve directly with the utility.

Many landline consumers, including myself, oppose COLR relief because some (sic) of the restrictions and limitations of alternate carrier services, as follows: Voice over Internet Protocol, also known as VoIP, often drop packets on the Internet connection, sometimes causing calls to drop. Latency issues can affect the quality of calls made through the VoIP phone systems. Latency problems occur when there's a poor Internet connection, causing delays, noise, and echo. VoIP services are highly vulnerable to data breaches and cyberattacks. General latency are other call quality issues you may experience with cloud-based phone calls. I've personally experienced FAX transmissions issues using VoIP where the VoIP sender
and receiver did not communicate with each other, because they use different types of technologies. Who uses a FAX? I usually don't. But, I deal sometimes with financial institutions that require me to send my Social Security card, my driver's license, and all my personal tax information either -- two choices, by U.S. mail or by FAX. I am not going to send my driver's license and personal Social Security card through the U.S. mail with all the mail theft and -- and the -- the identity theft going on. So I'll send it by FAX. I've tried numerous times to use my VoIP system at home to try to send FAXes, and it gets to so many pages, and they drop packets, and then the calls don't go through, and I can't transmit. I need to get my -- I thought, oh, I'll get my landline, plug it in, and that fixed the problem.

Cell service is not always reliable all -- alternative. Cell signal's also unavailable in homes and businesses, parking garage, elevators, hospitals, and essential facilities, like government or medical offices.

Even -- I live in the city. And I drove 300 miles today to come to this meeting, because I felt it was extremely important for the CPUC to hear that it's not just about picking and choosing what rural
areas will keep it and what cities can't keep it, based
on an algorithm that a telephone company decides they're
going to determine who can and can't keep it. Living in
the city, I got cell coverage all around. I have
residents in my community that will tell me that as soon
as you walk in their house, they have no coverage. They
need their landline phones.

Some people even have sensitivity to EMF or
electromagnetic
hypersensitivity, and they choose not to use cell
phones, cordless phones, or devices using Internet
modems or routers. Some people have sensitivity to
that.

Some people have special needs, and need analog
landline to be connected to heart monitors, life call
buttons, et cetera.

Some people, including seniors, still want a
land -- rely on landlines for Universal LifeLine
Telephone Service at discounted rate on a
lit -- limited income. Voice over IP and many providers
don't offer the Universal LifeLine.

There are some people who are confused using
the cell phone, whether it's a smartphone or a cell flip
phone, and they're used to their old traditional rotary
dialer touchtone phones.
Some homes and businesses have older wiring that cannot support alternative services like the Internet VoIP, and they've been denied getting newer modern services because their home or multi-business -- their multi-business unit or their multi-dwelling residential -- you can't run wiring through the building, and the older wiring won't support it, and the landline's the only option.

E911, or Enhanced 911, works best with the landline phone connected to a phone jack that doesn't require electricity.

Central offices have backup batteries, if there's a power outage. Many --

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: Sir --

SPEAKER KOUNIS: Many VoIP phones --

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: I apologize, sir, but would you mind, please, wrapping your comment? We have lots of other --

SPEAKER KOUNIS: Sure.

(Crosstalk.)

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: -- speaking, and we want to make sure that -- that we have a chance to get to everybody.

SPEAKER KOUNIS: Okay. Sure. So -- so, yeah.

A lot of people here have already addressed the issues
with the -- the landlines and the 911, you know, and
we -- you know, major earthquakes and other things. We
don't know what kind of reliability cell phones are
going to have.

So anyway, I just wanted -- I appreciate you,
you know, taking the time to listen to my comments.
Thank you.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you very much. Could we
have our next commenter, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER BISSELL

Hi. I am Margaret Peggy Bissell,
B-i-s-s-e-l-l, like the vacuum cleaner. My husband
likes to say that's the poor side of the family.

I am retired from AT&T after 38 years,
11 months, and 14 days. My mother retired from the
phone company with over 38 years. They cheated her out
of some of her seniority, and I testified on her
cheating of that at the state capitol.

I am a retired executive vice president of CWA
9408. I'm very proud of that, you guys. I'm sorry.
I'm very upset. I'm shaking. I'm so angry that this
could even come before you people. I'm now -- well, for
the last 18 years, I've represented retirees in our
local area, which is upwards to 700 retirees from
Porterville to Madera. Some of those are on daily calls to me. Their calls start at five o'clock in the morning, because they have nobody else to care for them. And I'm their stopgap. I'm the person who gets the call that says, "I'm okay today, Peggy. You don't have to come find me." That's not going to happen with the cell phone. The areas some of these ladies live in don't work. I'm sorry. I'm going to go over just a bit.

The lady mentioned that she would gladly do training for people. We have areas that don't have Internet. They're so low-income, AT&T doesn't care to invest in those areas. So that's not going to work.

I'd like to know what companies -- which AT&T hasn't put anything before you guys that says, "We have these companies interested in taking over our hard lines." If you don't have that in place, you absolutely cannot approve this. You can't. We have to have somebody there to take care of them.

(Applause.)

SPEAKER BISSELL: My husband and his family are west side farmers. They farm all the way from up on 152 to Dinosaur Point all the way into Coalinga. Cell phones don't work all the way along there, either. You know, it's not going to work.

I guess the last thing I have to say, to the
lady that has the princess phone, if you're in the Fresno High area -- I'm not going to give you my -- guys my address -- we have a pay phone that actually works at our house with a phone booth. So we need a Superman right now.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Can we have our next commenter, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER NANNINI

Yes, my name is Ivy Nannini, and Peggy there -- she's a hard person to be behind, because she's covered everything. I want to say thank you, Clovis, for giving us this opportunity to talk. I am so proud of everybody here today, and everybody that showed up. They came from a lot further than I did. I live out on the other side of 99 about five miles.

I -- I -- I don't think that it's safe to have the -- the rats and the SARs and everything on your body and all day. It's a proven fact that it's not healthy, you know. A lot of these people are -- are older, because they -- they're not surrounded by so much SARs and radiation all day long. It's very unhealthy.

Also, I have fam -- a lot of family members that are very disabled, you know. I lost two in the last year, but the one that isn't, she relies completely
on -- on the landline phone, and so do I, really. I don't like a bunch of information on the cell phones. It's like -- and, you know, just the other day, I just used one, if I am on the road, in case somebody has to get ahold of me in an emergency, and it -- it -- it's not a real expensive on but, you know, sometimes you have to have one for emergencies, but otherwise, we have -- I had one for over 30 years. All my family has them. We've always lived in the rural area, and we would like to be able to keep that.

If you guys would consider that, we would appreciate it.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you very much.

Our next three commenters are Robert Longar, Stan Santos and Dina Jackson.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER LONGAR

Good afternoon, Commissioner Reynolds, ALJ Glegola and community members. My name is Robert Longar. I am with the Communications Workers of America, CWA District 9.

We would like to speak today with regard to AT&T's current COLR obligations and their desire to terminate these COLR designations that would jeopardize
telephone access for many communities. Consumers rely on their home telephone service to access public safety services, especially during emergencies, as you've heard, and other urgent situations.

AT&T claims there are other options for consumers, but they also fail to submit to the CPUC proper evidence that would be meaningful opportunities for telephone services. They claim that small telephone companies with a fraction of the resources can somehow cover wide ranges of California.

If this AT&T application is approved, then AT&T will be able to just pick and choose which neighborhoods and communities it wants to serve.

AT&T has already refused to fully maintain its network, and by doing this, they are step-by-step trying to withdraw telephone services from communities often low income and rural areas. AT&T has spent the last several years going around the county, in fact, terminating its COLR requirements. They also sponsored unsuccessful legislation here in California a few years ago. All this time, money, and resources would have been better spent maintaining their networks instead of picking and choosing who they want to serve.

The AT&T application should be rejected, and the CPUC should make every effort to make sure that AT&T
carries out its obligation to provide effective and meaningful service to everyone in its territories.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Can we have our next commenter, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER JACKSON

Hello. My name is Dina Jackson, and I first want to make a comment. One of the ladies said that it looked like the application was already presumed to pass, so I hope this is not an exercise in futility.

From what I hear, it's over 95 percent against the landlines -- I mean, against eliminating the landline.

I do have a landline that I have had for about the past 40 years. I love my AT&T landline. I moved from the Fresno High area where I had my landline up to Tesoro Viejo. After three requests and three orders placed, I found out AT&T has relinquished that area to Ponderosa.

I have lots of cell phones in the house, but I still love having my landline. I have a 90-plus year old mother, who -- she loses her charger -- her -- her phone -- her cell phone, even though we got her Consumer Cellular, she loses that, she forgets to charge it, but
she will pick up that landline and make her phone call.

So, there's a lot of security in having the landline. There's also a habit. You know, there's a lot of people who are between 75 to 100 that they're used to having that regular phone; and it seems like in -- in -- in society, we are just kind of neglecting that age group in a lot of areas.

So, besides the security and the habit, there's also the -- the reliability. It is something that we do and can rely on, and that cannot be ignored.

So -- oh, so, I just feel like we still need the landline, even though I think we also need the cell phones. I appreciate my cell phone, but at the same time, I know that that landline is critical. It's crucial.

So, I just want to say thank you. But I also wonder -- and I mean I really almost hate to say this, but will AT&T be liable when that person who was forced to give up their landline has a devastating event because of not having service? You know, I am in a two-story house now and downstairs, my cell phone does not work. If I get up on -- actually, it'll ring, but I have to run upstairs to actually talk on it. So, I thank Ponderosa for coming and putting in my landline.

Thank you. I -- I hope the application is
denied.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Could we have our next commenter, please?

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER SANTOS

Yeah, Stan Santos. Lifelong resident of Fresno.

I worked for AT&T and began in Silicon Valley in 1999 building controlled environment vaults, which was the top-of-the-line technology. During that time, it converted to fiber, to copper and then went to your home as DSL. I think the top speed was maybe 12 megs, which was smoking then.

I come to Fresno, and I retired in 2022. In 2022, I was still working in Firebaugh and Mendota building DSL, which were not much better than the DSL I was building 25 years before.

Now, there's discriminatory practices. I spoke at dozens of these meetings, and I -- I don't know if this will be my last one. Maybe I will be in a wheelchair next time, but I have spoke between -- before the CPUC, I have spoke before the State Assembly. I have spoken before hearings at Congress about the same thing. Discriminatory practices by AT&T specifically. Now, Frontier and the rest are not too far behind.
Comcast is one of the worst.

But discriminatory practices and also forced migration off the landlines, a reliable service. They're decommissioning the facilities in the central office and in the field, and they're making people turn that phone off and have no option to go to except for a cell phone; and for a lot of the elderly people, you try to ask them where their cell phone is, and there's going to be a pause for about 20, 30 minutes sometimes. No offense. I am getting there.

But I am just saying, please, please, please, do not allow this to happen. There should be a smooth transition from one technology to the other. Until fiber technology is ubiquitous and disbursed enough so that people can get a -- get a connection anywhere and everywhere, until that happens, then the landlines have to be maintained and our forces cannot be out there fighting with both hands behind their back. They're trying to fix lines. They're trying to find ways to patch the outside plan together while AT&T is ordering other staff and technicians to decommission, to remove cards, to shut down circuits.

It's discriminatory practices, and it's forced migration. It should be illegal.

Thank you.
(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

SPEAKER SANTOS: I also have written comments, and I can either submit them electronically or here, if you want me to.

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: I think you can provide them to the public advisor, who is at the table outside.

SPEAKER SANTOS: Okay. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: Of course. Thank you.

ALJ GLEGOLA: So, next we have two additional commenters. The first one is Pam Baugher, I think that's how I -- I -- I may be corrected on that. The last name is spelled B-a-u-g-h-e-r.

SPEAKER BAUGHER: You're doing just fine.

ALJ GLEGOLA: The second one is Eileen Graham.

**STATEMENT OF SPEAKER BAUGHER**

Thank you. I am Pam Baugher from Bakersfield. I have been an AT&T brat since I was a year old, and my dad started working for the phone company as a cable splicer. We -- my sisters and my brother and I have been very loyal to AT&T over the years. Our landlines are important for safety as it's been brought up before. And remember when COVID hit and all the kids were sent
home? How was the internet access? It sucked. I mean, that's just the nicest way.

I taught for Bakersfield City for 40 years. I was on the school board when COVID hit and just trying to get positive things like that. And if AT&T is allowed to just shut down landlines, it's going to be the same thing all over again. There won't be adequate service. There's not enough cell service around.

My schools entered the 20th century in about the year 2001 when we got phone service in our classrooms. Now, cell service? No, they're all landlines. That's 44 schools just in Bakersfield City School District. How are all the schools going to try to transfer equipment to (indecipherable) and go to cell. That's going to be extremely expensive, so that is a consideration as well.

And a lot of people don't want cells, and it's not because we are all old. I know younger people who don't or they can't afford one, stuff like that, and we need to be considerate of everybody's needs.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Could we have the next commenter, please?

///
STATEMENT OF SPEAKER GRAHAM

Good afternoon, my name is Eileen Graham.
Thank you for having this meeting today.

I support what everybody has said about not getting rid of AT&T. And I will tell you, as a retired first responder -- I know from firsthand hand because I did it -- that when somebody was -- would call in on 9-1-1 on a landline, I knew -- well, we knew exactly where you were at. We would always confirm the address, because there's always room for error, but never in my 30 years or 27 years that I worked in law enforcement was 9-1-1 ever off.

If you call 9-1-1 on a cell phone, it would bounce to a nearest tower, which generally went to CHP, CHP would then have to transfer that call to the appropriate area. You guys keeping track of the time that is being wasted here? Okay. Then they would come, and I would get -- we would get the call, and I would have -- I would look at the screen, and there's nothing there; and I would have to, like, interview them. Like, "Where are you at? What's the problem?" You know, they would tell the -- the other operator that we need an ambulance or something like that, but I need a little more information. Like, where do I get -- where are we going to send this ambulance?
So, that's an issue that is probably very life-threatening, and it's something you guys should think about and, you know, if it -- I just -- I -- I just don't like to see it happen.

Thank you.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you very much.

So, that is all that -- on the list of folks that want to speak that I have right now.

I did want to check. Does anybody want to speak? We can take a quick break. Y'all can sign up, and then we can come back into session.

You do, sir?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just have one thing I want to ask about. What happens to all of the employees from AT&T? Do they all just get laid off all over the state?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yep.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thousands? That's what I was afraid of.

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: I do want to point out the --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That was my --

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: I appreciate --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just thought I would throw it out there, sir.
COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: I appreciate the question. I do want to point out that we have -- we have not made any decisions in this proceeding.

Just for everyone's clarity, as we go through the process in this proceeding, we have a chance to take evidence. Parties to the proceeding have a chance to raise questions that are related to it and will have a chance to delve into some of the -- some of the potential consequences and facts surrounding the proposal that AT&T has made.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I just thought I would throw it out there.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: They're not abandoning lines, they're abandoning people. All of these people. That's what they're abandoning, and they don't care if they live or die.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's what I figured.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Okay. Well, since there are -- no one else that wants to make a public comment.

Commissioner, do you have final comments?

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: I want to reiterate my appreciation for everyone coming to share their perspectives with us.

It's really valuable to us as an agency and to our process to hear from you about what you think about
AT&T's proposals. Again, I will reiterate that we have made no decisions in this proceeding. Our proceedings have kind of a lengthy process. Public participation is one part of that process. We will also have evidentiary hearings, legal briefs. There is -- there is more to come yet in this proceeding before we are in a position to make a decision, and no decision will be final until we have a vote of at least three of the five commissioners at the PUC.

I see that we have someone who has a hand raised.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I do, because this lady was nice enough to mention she was a 9-1-1 operator.

Okay. When I was having a stroke, I didn't know where I was. That landline virtually saved my life, because the operator knew exactly where I was at that moment --

(Applause.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- and they got me right to the hospital.

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: Okay. Thank you. Thank you for sharing your stories. It sounds like there is no one else who is present who would like to make a comment, so I want to reiterate my thanks to everybody. Is that correct, is there someone who would
like to make a comment?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, my husband has dementia, and he doesn't have a cell phone, he doesn't know how to --

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: Um --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He doesn't have a cell phone, he doesn't have -- he can't use a computer. The only thing --

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: If I just can -- just to pause you for a moment. I apologize, because we have a court reporter who is actually taking down what people say.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: We can take a brief break, so that you have a chance to sign up, and then you can make a comment from the microphone so that we can record your comment.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I was just going to say we need the landlines. We need those.

ALJ GLEGOLA: So, is that a sign that no one else wants to speak? We can -- we can wait a few minutes and sign up and then...

(Crosstalk.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Okay. Well, it sounds like a no then. So, I just want to say, again, I want to thank --
165 people showed up. I very much thank you for that.

For those who commented, we appreciate and note that you took time out of your day. You could be elsewhere.

I also want to thank everyone who helped pull this hearing off. That includes the City of Clovis, our court reporters and all the staff at the Public Advocates Office. Thank you for your help.

This concludes the 2:00 p.m. public participation hearing for A.23-03-002 and A.23-03-003.

We are adjourned and off the record, and we will be back at 6:00 p.m.

Thank you.

(At the hour of 3:45 P.M., this matter having been continued to 6:00 p.m., February 6, 2024, the Commission then adjourned.)
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE GLEGOLA: We are on the record.

The Commission will please come to order.

Today is February 6th, 2024. This is the time and place for the second of the two public participation hearings that are held today in two proceedings being reviewed by the California Public Utilities Commission.

As I mentioned off the record, the first proceeding is Application 23-03-002. This is the Application of AT&T California to withdraw its Eligible Telecommunications Carrier designation.

The second proceeding is Application 23-03-003. This is the application of AT&T California to withdraw as a carrier of last resort from much of its service territory; and there's also other items in that application.

Today's public participation hearings -- or we call them PPHs, for short -- are being held at the Clovis City Council chambers. I very much want to thank the City of Clovis for allowing us to use this room today.

I also want to make sure and encourage members
of the public that wish to comment, please know that you
may comment on either proceeding or both at the same
time.

My name is Thomas J. Glegola. I am the
assigned administrative law judge to this proceeding.
The Honorable John Reynolds is the assigned
commissioner.

Commissioner, do you wish to make some opening
remarks?

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: Yes. Thank you,
Judge Glegola.

And good evening, everyone. Thank you for
being here with us. I appreciate you taking the time
out of your evening to -- to come and speak about these
proceedings.

I am Commissioner John Reynolds, the assigned
commissioner to the two applications the judge
mentioned.

Thank you, also, to the City of Clovis for
hosting us here today.

To get us started, I wanted to talk a little
bit about the PUC and about these proceedings.

The California Public Utilities Commission, or
the PUC, or the Commission, is the regulatory agency for
all of Californians' investor-owned public utilities,
spanning energy, water, and the telecommunications industries. The Commission is headed by five commissioners, with each commissioner serving staggered six-year terms.

As a commissioner, I am assigned to a wide variety of cases, including these cases that have been requested by AT&T.

What do these requests mean? AT&T has come before the PUC asking for two separate requests.

First, we have the request to relinquish their eligible telecommunications carrier designation, or ETC, for short. An ETC is a telephone company that operates in a specific geographic area that receives financial assistance from the Federal Universal Service Fund to provide affordable telephone service to customers at all income levels. AT&T is essentially requesting to no longer operate as an ETC in California.

Second, we have AT&T's request for relief from its carrier of last resort obligation. We sometimes call that COLR, carrier of last resort, or COLR, for short. A COLR is a telecommunications service provider that stands ready to provide basic telephone service, which is commonly landline telephone service, to any customer requesting such service within a specified area. AT&T is the designated COLR in many parts of this
state, and is the largest COLR in California. Where
AT&T is the default basic telephone service provider, it
must provide basic telephone service to any potential
customer in that service territory.

When we talk about basic telephone service, I
want to emphasize that this does not necessarily mean
that your particular home phone service is basic service
or that it is provided by landline copper or by
fiber-optic wireline. There are a lot of technologies
on the network today. Your home phone service may, for
example, be provided by Voice over Internet Protocol, or
VoIP.

The purpose of today's hearings are for the
Commission to hear from you, from customers or concerned
Californians, about the proceedings that are before us.
Today's public comments, in addition to the comments
made at all of the public participation hearings that we
will be held -- holding over the next few weeks, will
help the Commission evaluate AT&T's requests in both
cases. It is crucial to our decision-making process
that we hear from customers on the issues before us
today. And I wanted to thank you again for joining us
this evening.

Where are we at in these cases? After the
public participation hearings conclude, which will be on
March 19th, Judge Glegola will hold evidentiary hearings at the Commission's San Francisco hearing rooms. After hearings, AT&T and other active parties in this case may file legal briefs. After that process, Judge Glegola will issue a proposed decision for the Commission to consider at one of its official voting meetings. And our current schedule provides for that to happen later this year. No decision has yet been made about AT&T's requests. AT&T has made its requests, but no changes can occur without a vote on a proposed decision supported by a majority of the five commissioners.

And with that, I'm going to turn it back to you, Judge Glegola.

And I look forward to hearing from all of you.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you, Commissioner.

And I just want to add a couple other items before we turn things over to members of the public.

First, if you are interested in -- in the specific laws that we're looking or authorities that we're looking to interpret or implement when an eligible telecommunications carrier can withdraw, it is determined by federal law, and standards are very specific. It's in 47 U.S. Code § 214(e), and which states, in part, that an eligible telecommunications carrier may withdraw its ETT -- ETC designation if other
ETCs are able to serve all of their relinquishing customers. When a carrier of last resort may withdraw, and how it does, is determined under Commission Decision 96-10-006; and that was the decision that designated AT&T as a carrier of last resort in 1996, as well as many other carriers, and that is also when the Commission adopted its carrier of last resort rules.

If another COLR is not present in the service territory of a COLR that's looking to withdraw, such as is the case here, AT&T must apply to the Commission for permission to withdraw. As part of the rules, the Commission also must allow potential COLRs to bid on the opportunity to replace AT&T. That has not yet happened; but, that's a key part of this proceeding.

If the Commission grants AT&T's application, and only if it grants the application, AT&T then will have the ability to withdraw service in any community where its application is granted. Both applications are opposed.

If you would like more details about these applications beyond the high level overview that I or Commissioner Reynolds have provided, I would encourage you either to take and read a fact sheet, if there are anymore available on the table in the lobby, or to go to the Commission's website, specifically www.cpuc --
that's California Public Utilities Commission --
.ca.gov/pph; PPH, like public participation hearing.
You will find more information on this proceeding,
including the positions of various parties.

Finally, and I assume this is a -- a major
reason why so many people were at the previous hearing
that we had today, as well as this one, AT&T should have
mailed notice of its COLR application to all landline
customers, both those that rely on what we call plain
old telephone service and those that use Voice over the
Internet Protocol.

An in-person evidentiary hearing is scheduled
for the ETC application, and we need to reschedule one
for the COLR application.

In addition to all of the evidence that we're
looking for, of course, and as Commissioner Reynolds
already mentioned, we want to hear from you how this --
how these applications will impact you, your family,
your community. Your comments will help the Commission
gather information to determine whether to grant,
reject, or modify these applications. In addition to
considering the comments received here today, we also
will consider comments that have been submitted
electronically or by other means. The last time I
looked, we have received over 1400 comments on AT&T's
Again, if you would like to provide comments at the podium, please sign up with our Public Advisor's Office at the table located in the back. And if you have any customer questions, there are representatives from AT&T here.

Okay. Before hearing from you, I want to go over some ground rules. Court reporters will be transcribing everything that is said, so please remember to speak slowly and clearly; otherwise, our court reporters will have a difficult job of taking down everything that's said. Also, I'm not seeing the light on that mic, so the first person that's up there may need -- may need to turn that on. Only one person at a time can speak, as our court reporters are unable to transcribe an accurate record when more than one person's speaking. We will hear you best if you speak directly into the microphone. And to ensure we have an accurate record, it may be necessary, at times, for either myself or Commissioner Reynolds or our court reporters to interrupt you. We don't want to interrupt you. We -- we -- we really try not to. But, if we're not hearing you, that means likely our court reporters aren't hearing you, and that means what you're saying is not being transcribed. After this public participation hearing...
hearing is over, we will have a written transcript of
this hearing ready later on.

And finally, a reminder to those who wish to
speak, if you have not already done so, please sign up
with the Public Advisor's Office. At this time, I'm
asking that you limit your comments to two minutes; but,
that may change.

So, with that, we are going to move to our
first -- our first public commenter, and that is
Eric Powane (sic). And apologies if I mispronounce
names. I'm going to try to do my very best, though.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER PAYNE

Good evening, Commissioner Reynolds and Judge
Pagalo -- Paga -- help me, here. Pago --

ALJ GLEGOLA: Glegola.

SPEAKER PAYNE: Glegola, yes. My name is
Eric Payne. I'm the executive director of the Central
Valley Urban Institute, and we are a policy, advocacy,
research, and action institute that serves seven
counties across the Central Valley, with our -- our
headquarters being in Fresno, and offices in Stockton
and Tulare. We represent the interests of low-income
communities across our region who are often on the
margins of the decision-making process; and so, we're
here today representing our constituents.
We recognize that -- what we know is there are no other options for residents or businesses if the request is granted. We recognize AT&T's history of aggressive profiteering during the pandemic, and it presents a dangerous roadmap for how a larger, more powerful company would act if the behavior were allowed to proceed with today's request from the applicant.

Given the party's record of raising consumer prices year over year for customers and cutting benefits to workers to pad their own profits and the unusual circumstances of $122 billion in revenue closing out fiscal year 2023 that will be paid out in the form of a nice dividend to its shareholders on the backs of low-income communities across the State of California, we respectfully ask that the Public Utilities Commission reject AT&T's request to negate their legal obligation to meet the basic needs of low-income Californians, specifically rural residents and businesses in our region, who have the most to lose, with no lifeline in sight.

We wanted to thank you for your time and your commitment to our region, and it is our -- it is our position that we stand in strong opposition of both requests. Thank you.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you very much. Our next speaker is the chairman of the Fresno County Board of
Supervisors, Chairman Nathan Magsig.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER MAGSIG

Commissioners, thank you for choosing Clovis.

Again, this is not your first time here. I've seen you over the years, and really appreciate you making it easier for my constituents and the residents of Central California to come to share some of their concerns and observations.

So I'm here today just to talk more generally about the need for more connectivity in the rural parts of the center part of California. I represent about 2800 square miles, which includes a lot of foothill and mountain areas, and there are a lot of gaps in service. And what that means -- schoolchildren who are trying to access, you know, materials that are on-line -- there are challenges with that. So I really believe that we need to be working with our partners like AT&T, our partners like T-Mobile, our partners like Verizon, in expanding the network, and just connecting people in the more rural parts of Fresno County and the Central Valley.

I do think about a lot of the disadvantaged communities that we have right here, as well, in the Central Valley, and so many times, they are the ones that are forgotten. And so, it's not just the east side
of Fresno County, but the west side, as well. Fresno County has 15 cities. The metropolitan area, which consists of the cities of Fresno and Clovis, generally speaking, have pretty good connectivity; but, the further out you get from the -- the center, the metro center of Fresno County, the more difficult it is to access Internet services.

I know that we're looking and talking a little bit about copper, because there's still a lot of people who rely on copper lines, landlines, and I would just say that whatever is done moving forward, I would want to see services to people that still rely on landlines -- for their services to improve, and never diminish.

So to the extent that both can be accomplished, that we're able to enhance services and connectivity, I'm fully in support of -- of moving forward, making sure that California continues to be connected better and better.

So I'm here just to speak on behalf of my residents, also Fresno County, as a whole, and again to thank you for being here today to allow the residents of -- of Fresno County as well as the Central Valley -- giving them an opportunity to voice their concerns and support. Thank you.
ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Our next commenter is Barbara Yorgan.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER YORGAN

I limited myself to about a minute earlier today and everyone else went on three, four, five minutes, so I came back to finish what I was going to say.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Please do.

SPEAKER YORGAN: I'd like to read the articles that I am going to be quoting from partly. It's "Mobile Phones Are Hazardous Microbial Platforms Warranting Robust Public Health and Biosecurity Protocols." It's in Scientific Reports, June 2022; and the other one is by Joel Moskowitz, "Cell Phone Radiation is Harmful, But Few Want to Believe It."

Radio frequencies stopped being funded by the government in 1990s. Why? That's a big why. Why did they stop funding it? There's a lot of research that has been done without their funding, and the results are very, very problematic.

The 5Gs are of greater concern. It's going to lead to 2.5 more antenna sites, and that's bad for the environment. It's bad for people and bats and birds. There's a preponderance of research of the adverse biological health effects from long-term exposure.
I was in the store the other day, and he looked about four months old, and the mother had the phone right up to the kid's eyes. Not good.

There's an increase of -- it's called oxidative stress, free radicals, stress proteins and can lead to DNA damage and lead to cell death. Brain tumors such as gliomas and acoustic neuromas are two types of brain tumors. This is true for cell phones, cordless phones, wireless devices, Wi-Fi and laptops, and medical facilities have had antibiotic resistant genes, and if you're wearing a mask, which they usually do in hospitals and you're always on your cell phone, I think you have a double whammo(sic) type of problem, because the mask are contaminants.

The cell phone industry is either silent or will downplay risks. We have inadequate biosecurity measures in agricultural, native flora, marine fauna and native flora livestock and aquatic farms because of travel and global population infections, such as influenza. These things travel.

There have been nosocomial bacterium disastrous in premature babies with known outbreaks linked to phone receivers. There was a woman who talked today about increasing all of this in the schools for teens, I consider that to be child abuse.
We need to reduce the reliance on this stuff. I suggest that you take two cans and a string and teach your little children how to talk on the phone with two cans and a string. Teach them manual control. Teach them to write their -- print their names, to write it in script, to do math with their fingers without the use of any cell phones and any computers. Read to them, bring back the toys and games and activities we had when we were children where you look -- you're using manual dexterity. When you use your hands, it has a different effect on your brain and your learning.

We -- the idea of wanting to increase this stuff, I think we should just rollback. It's too hazardous. It's -- it's very bad for child development. I spoke with someone the other day, I wanted to send -- give her an article to look up. I told her, "I don't have a cell phone. I can't fax anything to you. I can't send any -- text anything to you." She kept telling me to text her. I kept telling her, "I can't text you."

Mentally, she just doesn't conceptually understand that there are people who don't have cell phones. I told her it's just a few words. Write it down and go look it up. "I am at work." You don't have a pen and paper that you can just write a few words down
and look it up? She said, "What do you want me to mail it to you in an envelope?" This is how bad this has become.

I consider this to be very dangerous, because our minds are being controlled by technology, and it's absolutely excessive, so I'm opposed to getting rid of landline phones.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Our next commenter is Neal Haas.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER HAAS

Hi, my name is Neal Haas. I'm here to comment -- I was here earlier at 2:00.

Basically, AT&T doesn't want to provide phone services any longer, so they want to either convert to fiber or cancel service to rural areas. I was trying to figure it out because a lot of people were mentioning or worried about them living in rural communities and no longer having the landline.

So, is AT&T planning on canceling those, or are they planning on selling off those areas? That is really what I want to know. You know, we need to keep cell -- or landline services available for everyone, not force everyone to get a cell phone because a lot of the rural communities do not have cellular coverage.

Thank you.
ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Our next commenter is Jeff McAdoo.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER MCADOO

My name is Jeff McAdoo. Thank you for being here to hear us out, because we don't often get an opportunity like this it seems like, you know, in the Fresno/Clovis area, so thank you for recognizing our area as being important, because it is.

So, the bottom line, I don't want to lose my second course of communication. Obviously, I have a cell phone, and I live by the cell phone but that landline is very, very important; and it became very important a month or so ago when I had to call 9-1-1. They knew my exact location, and I didn't have to -- you know, I knew -- obviously, I know where I live, but if I am at somebody else's house, "what is your address?"

Well, I don't know, you know. You -- are you going to go look outside when you're trying to do CPR on a person? You need a landline, and I think most people should have a landline, quite frankly; and I would like a true landline.

It seemed like when I switched over to something -- AT&T put in a U-Verse type thing, and then when the power goes out, I don't have power to that phone for very long at a time, whereas before, when I
had a wire right to it, you didn't have to have an external source of power.

So, for emergencies, I think that's very important; and in today's day and age with the world situation, we don't know what tomorrow might bring, so it is more important to have a landline.

So, hang on a second here.

And then, I am not married to AT&T, quite frankly. They're kind of forced upon us. If there was a better company, I would be in favor of looking at what they can offer before -- before we make that decision of giving them the business.

So, AT&T it seems like, you know, they're -- they don't want to have this business, so they keep raising the rates higher and higher and higher much faster than the inflation rates; and so, they're -- they're trying to drive people away by raising prices. Yeah, I mean, I pay over 100 bucks a month for just a landline and internet service, and it shouldn't be that high. It shouldn't be that high.

So, I don't know who the other providers you would be looking at. I know that very close we have Ponderosa, who -- you know, we have another place up in the mountains, and they seem to do a very good job.

I don't know all the ins and outs, and I don't
know why -- if one of the reasons AT&T wants to pull out is because they don't get the federal dollars anymore. Are they too big to get the federal dollars? So, what -- what's the criteria for them not to get it and, say, a smaller company to get those federal dollars and maybe reduce our rates at the same time.

Let me see. I jotted these down quickly here, and that is about it. But I thank you for being here, and I am all favor of continuing a landline, a true landline.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you, sir. Our next commenter is Adam Mohler.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER MOHLER

Good evening. My name is Adam Mohler, and I am a lifelong resident of Fresno County, and I have worked for AT&T for over 24 years.

Over that period of time, I have -- I have had the pleasure of working on several projects that truly meet the needs -- the technological needs and data needs of our customers. I have worked on broadband expansion providing video services, 4G and LTE to cell sites, fiber to homes, fiber to businesses, all of these projects have had one thing in common, and that is
pushing our fiber network deeper into our footprint to provide the services that people absolutely have based on their -- their requirements today.

So, I am in favor of AT&T's application, because I believe if this is approved, AT&T will have the ability to build even more fiber to the businesses and also to the residences that require these types of services, but the best part to me is we are not planning on leaving any existing consumers behind.

This is going -- going to allow existing customers today to remain with AT&T until a similar service is available for them. Hopefully, even a transition into an IP-based service.

So, I appreciate your time. Thank you.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you. Our next commenter is Denise Romero.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER ROMERO

Good evening Commissioners. I am Denise Romero, and I am a proud resident of Fresno. I used to live in Clovis, but I am in Fresno now, and I am a principal of an elementary school in Fresno Unified who has been supported by AT&T in a pretty impoverished area part of Fresno, Central Fresno; and so, our students do not have access in equity. This is an equity thing for me when I look at giving opportunities to have more
fiber in our communities. We are -- we are one of the
biggest areas and really proud area, but I feel like we
don't have the equity here that you see, like, in the
Bay Area or in LA; and so, for me, I want a bright
future more my students, their families. AT&T has
provided laptops for -- it was about 50 of my students
and with that, they were able to provide a lower, like,
amount for my families to be able to access internet
services that they would not have been able to access
without the support of AT&T.

So, I do feel that if this is granted, they
will be allowed to provide more opportunities for fiber
within our communities, be able to give more access to
our families; and so, I really would hope that we can go
ahead and allow this to go through.

Thank you very much.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Our next commenter is Sandra Ekparian.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER EKPARIAN

Good evening, Commissioners. My name is
Sandra D. Ekparian. I am here as a resident of Fresno,
and I am basically here on behalf of my mother. She's
91 years old, and she has cancer. And a while back,
because we have a landline, she punched in the phone,
9-1-1 automatically knew where my -- the address was,
called me right after that and came over. The ambulance was there within minutes and she ended up having a brain tumor. If she did not have that landline, she would not be able to get that access as quickly as we did; and we have had -- been there since 1970 in the same house, and there's always been a landline with Pac Bell and whoever back in the day, and she's been in the same house; and so, I am just hire on behalf of that and also, I am -- my residence, I have my internet with my landline. We've always been very happy with everything and -- except for the pack -- the fact that, yes, the prices do change very quickly, too much, and that's really not fair.

I believe as the man stated earlier, that is a hardship especially for senior citizens, but I am basically here for senior citizens as my mother, for my mother, and when I told her about it; and I read the letter to her, she was -- just got really upset about it, and I just decided to come here. I have never done this before, and I appreciate you listening to the residents and all the attention to this situation.

So, I am all for landlines, and I believe that it's just something that we need. I think there's other things to focus on in Fresno and Clovis and elsewhere in California. I mean, that's just something that -- it's
like a staple. I -- I just -- I am for it, and I hope it ends up still staying.

Thank you.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you for sharing.

Our next commenter is Sean Burdine.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER BURDINE

All right. Thank you for being here tonight and the opportunity to speak. I find this topic very concerning.

While I do not like the idea of government compelling a company to enter a contract that it does not want to enter, AT&T has already done so and is currently engaged in a contract to provide a vital service and utility to the people of California.

The company should be required to complete its designated obligation until a proper replacement or replacements are found that can continue the service and maintain a continuation of this public utility. There are many residents who already rely upon this landline for their service, and this could cause a disruption of that service for this vital utility.

Furthermore, I am very concerned this issue for residents will be further compounded by increasingly difficult times. We are all in difficult economic times and looking to get worse. There are countless families
barely keeping their heads above water, and as money becomes tighter, more families will lean on the utility for help. Not only are these costs across the board increasing including basics such as groceries and gas, it's my understanding that AT&T will also likely be ending the Access program, which allows for low-cost internet options for low-income residents.

Losing this program will likely be the difference for many homes on whether they can continue to keep their heads above water and will need to find ways to save money. It should then be that -- it should be then expected for many homes to further rely upon this landline to help save that money. I understand economically why AT&T wants to leave this obligation, but it does not appear they have currently met the requirements to leave it at this time.

It is already acknowledged within the documents that you provided that a replacement has not been found for this continuation of service and leaving now would negatively impact residents throughout California.

Thank you for your time.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

Our next commenter is Josie Almade.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER ALMADE

Hi, I'm Josie Almade, and I recently learned of
this hearing today. I am from Fresno, and I was very
disappointed with AT&T because I have been a customer
for many years, and not once in those billing notices
that I get, were we ever notified of their interest in
leaving their obligation.

I am also disappointed because I am mainly here
to help support the elderly senior citizens. There are
a number of elderly senior citizens, and when I had my
parents, they were included in having a landline and
using it for 9-1-1 purposes or even contacting somebody
if they needed assistance or even family members.

My father was not one to use a cell phone. My
mother was, but it was also very limited. I also have
elderly cousins who will only use landlines. That is
all that she can really handle is a landline. A cell
phone is not something that she can really comprehend or
use. She lives alone, and she's not the only senior
that lives alone.

So, what is being done for these individuals? Does AT&T not care? Is it more about the money and the
convenience versus what is needed for the people? What
about the non-English speaking customers? Was any of
this actually on the non-English speaking channels? I
don't know. Again, I barely heard of this myself.

What about those areas that don't have cell
phone service that was brought up earlier? Why was this limited to in-person? Why wasn't Zoom an option for some individuals that could have maybe seen or participated in this with their loved ones? The weather is terrible and yet, the only option was to come in person today at 2:00 and 6:00? And, you know, some home security systems are still tied into a landline. So, if the landline is removed, then the only option is to go with an automated in-home security, where not only you can watch what is in your home from your phone, but who else can watch the security of your home?

That's basically -- I just wanted to express how I feel today, and I hope that AT&T is not permitted to be relieved of their obligation.

Thank you.

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: I just wanted to note for everyone that we will be having a virtual public participation hearing on March 19th. If you or your friends or neighbors or family would be interested in participating in that, there is more information on the PUC website about our PPH schedule. As Judge Glegola outlined, that hearing will be held at adminmonitor.com/ca/cpuc, and there will be an opportunity to dial in, as well.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you, Commissioner.
So those are all the speakers that have signed up.

Is there anyone else that wants to speak?

I see one person. If you could do me a favor, and go to the podium, and if you could start by stating your name, and then spelling it, and then -- and then giving your remarks, we would appreciate it.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER LOBERG

My name is Lori Loberg. It's L-o-r-i L-o-b-e-r-g. And I'm here -- we did get the notice. Obviously, I know about it.

But, I'm here because I'm concerned about landlines when there's a power outage. Landlines provide that ability to call 911 or call family members. Without that, people are stuck, especially if it's weather, heavy snows. My mom lives up in the mountains. It's heavy snow, trees come down, wind blows. It gets a little scary. Landline is really really important.

Now, I've talked to AT&T on the phone. They've been very nice, and they have explained the idea of the Voice over IP. And, of course, when the Internet goes down, then that goes down. But, they have a -- they've explained that there's a -- it's like a tower that you can rent the service for $15 a month, and that is supposed to kick in to provide service, the Internet
service, so that the Voice over IP will continue to work for you when there is a power outage. Now, that sounds good; but, I don't know how long that lasts. And so I asked them that, and they said, well, they think it lasts as long as you need it, until a tech can come out and kind of reset it. Well, okay. Well, if I have a battery backup, that lasts like two to four hours, or I can connect something else. But, I asked, well, I -- "What if it's a week without power?" And she said, "Well, I think it lasts a week; but, I think you should just try it." Well, I don't to -- I don't want to put my mom in danger, if there's a power outage, and she has no access, because we're just trying it. So I'm not convinced.

Now, maybe AT&T can help us understand what that sort of a backup would be for this Voice over IP to go with that Internet option; but without that, without that, I don't think going without a lifeline is wise.

They also asked me, right off the bat, "Well, is the line that you're talking about -- is that in operation for an elevator or a fire alarm system?" And I said, "No." And they said, "Because that definitely needs a landline." And I thought, well, why is that so important, and what about -- what about all these other reasons why a landline is important?
So that makes me suspicious of what the Voice over IP solution really is. AT&T has been trying to push it. They've been raising the rates on landlines, like everybody knows, and I just think that that's something very very concerning. So I am opposed to having them released from their obligation.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: All right.

ALJ GLEGOLA: Thank you.

(Applause.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Is there anyone else?

(No response.)

ALJ GLEGOLA: Seeing none, Commissioner Reynolds, do you have any final remarks?

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: I just want to thank everyone again for joining us this evening. Thanks to those who provided some comments. I appreciate it. It is very helpful to our process. It helps us better understand your perspectives on the proposals from AT&T.

As I mentioned earlier, we have more process in these cases. Nothing has yet been decided. But, we will be taken -- taking into account the feedback from members of the public at the hearings that we've held today, as well as hearings that we'll be holding over the next few weeks as we move forward in this
proceeding. Thank you, again. It's wonderful to be with you all.

I see a hand raised. Is this -- is there an additional comment you'd like to make?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah. The comment --

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: I just want to note that our court reporters need to be able to transcribe everything that's said for the hearings, so if you could use the microphone to offer comment.

ALJ GLEGOLA: And state your name, and spell it, please.

STATEMENT OF SPEAKER PAYNE

Eric Payne, E-r-i-c P-a-y-n-e.

I just had a quick question. For the -- for the -- for the general public's knowledge, how might somebody else -- how might they engage as a party to the proceeding if they're representing a -- a nonprofit or organization that -- that's here, or if they know of a nonprofit or organization that would like to participate in the proceeding?

COMMISSIONER JOHN REYNOLDS: I welcome the judge correcting me on anything here.

Our Public Advisor's Office, who is present today, can assist with -- with becoming a party, and understanding what that means, what are some of the
obligations and what are some of the opportunities to participate as a -- a party in our proceedings. We have a -- a generally fairly legalistic administrative process, and parties typically participate in that. It includes things like presenting evidence and legal argument and briefs.

Judge, is there anything you'd like to add to that?

ALJ GLEGOLA: And it would start with a motion for party status, filing that, as well. But, the Public Advisor's Office can give you some information, to start out with.

So does that conclude your remarks? Okay. Very well.

Okay. Well, thank you, Commissioner. Thank you, everyone, for coming today. 165 people were here at the 2:00 p.m. meeting, and roughly 65 were at this one. I very much thank you for taking the time out of your day. I know you could be elsewhere.

I also want to thank everyone who helped pull this off, whether it's the folks at the City of Clovis, our court reporters, folks at the Public Advisor's Office, folks at -- that work for Commissioner Reynolds.

And again, thank you, all. I very much appreciate you taking the time.
This concludes the 6:00 p.m. public participation hearing for Application 23-03-002 and Application 23-03-003. We are adjourned, and off the record.

(At the hour of 6:58 p.m., this matter having been continued to 2:00 p.m., February 22, 2024, the Commission then adjourned.)

* * * * *

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION, STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA
BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

CERTIFICATION OF TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDING

I, ASHLEIGH BUTTON, CERTIFIED SHORTHAND REPORTER NO. 14013, IN AND FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE PAGES OF THIS TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY ME COMPRISE A FULL, TRUE, AND CORRECT TRANSCRIPT OF THE TESTIMONY AND PROCEEDINGS HELD IN THIS MATTER ON FEBRUARY 6, 2024.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT I HAVE NO INTEREST IN THE EVENTS OF THE MATTER OR THE OUTCOME OF THE PROCEEDING.

EXECUTED THIS FEBRUARY 12, 2024.

ASHLEIGH BUTTON
CSR NO. 14013
BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
OF THE
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

CERTIFICATION OF TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDING

I, REBEKAH L. DE ROSA, CERTIFIED SHORTHAND
REPORTER NO. 8708, IN AND FOR THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA,
DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE PAGES OF THIS TRANSCRIPT
PREPARED BY ME COMPRISE A FULL, TRUE, AND CORRECT
TRANSCRIPT OF THE TESTIMONY AND PROCEEDINGS HELD IN
THIS MATTER ON FEBRUARY 6, 2024.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT I HAVE NO INTEREST IN THE
EVENTS OF THE MATTER OR THE OUTCOME OF THE PROCEEDING.

EXECUTED THIS FEBRUARY 12, 2024.

REBEKAH L. DE ROSA
CSR NO. 8708
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