

File No. 100825

Committee Item No.

Board Item No. 48

COMMITTEE/BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

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Committee:

Date:

Board of Supervisors Meeting

Date: June 22, 2010

Cmte Board

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- Legislative Analyst Report
- Ethics Form 126
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OTHER

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Completed by: Victor Young

Date June 17, 2010

Completed by: _____

Date _____

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1 [Opposing the Reduction in Minimum Standards for Basic Telephone Service]

2
3 **Resolution opposing a proposal of the California Public Utilities Commission to reduce**
4 **the minimum standards for basic telephone service in California.**

5
6 WHEREAS, Current California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) regulations require
7 wireline telephone carriers in California, such as AT&T, to provide services that meet
8 minimum standards for "basic telephone service"; and

9 WHEREAS, The current minimum standards include the ability to receive unlimited
10 incoming calls without charge; and

11 WHEREAS, The current minimum standards also include the ability to choose between
12 "flat service," which allows unlimited local calls, and "measured service", which (for a lower
13 monthly fee than flat service) bills customers for local calls beyond a limited allowance; and

14 WHEREAS, The current minimum standards ensure that all customers, including low
15 income customers who qualify for discounted Lifeline service, have options for telephone
16 service that meet their basic needs, are affordable, and allow for predictable monthly bills; and

17 WHEREAS, In a Ruling dated May 10, 2010, the CPUC has proposed to weaken the
18 current minimum standards for basic telephone service in the hope that "technology-neutral"
19 standards would entice wireless and voice over Internet protocol ("VOIP") carriers to offer
20 discounted Lifeline services; and

21 WHEREAS, The CPUC proposal would allow all telephone companies, including
22 wireline carriers, to charge for each incoming call and would no longer require any telephone
23 company to offer flat service; and

1 WHEREAS, In light of the limited competition for wireline telephone service, the CPUC
2 proposal could deprive consumers, including low-income households, of affordable services
3 that offer unlimited local calling and free incoming calls, thereby increasing the cost of basic
4 telephone service and the volatility of monthly bills; and

5 WHEREAS, Notwithstanding the increasing popularity of wireless services, wireline
6 service offers important advantages over wireless service, including superior call quality,
7 better reliability during power failures, and superior 911 access to local emergency services;
8 and

9 WHEREAS, A recent United States government survey shows that almost 75% of
10 American households still subscribe to wireline telephone service; and

11 WHEREAS, Respected consumer organizations, such as The Utility Reform Network
12 ("TURN"), the National Consumer Law Center, and Disability Rights Advocates, strongly
13 oppose the CPUC proposal to reduce the minimum standards for basic service; and

14 WHEREAS, The better way to expand Lifeline discounts to wireless and other mobile
15 services would be for the CPUC to develop a separate basic service definition for those
16 services, rather than by weakening the basic service definition for wireline services; now,
17 therefore, be it

18 RESOLVED, That it shall be the policy of the City and County of San Francisco to
19 oppose the CPUC proposal to reduce the minimum standards for basic telephone service;
20 and, be it

21 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the City Attorney, with the assistance of the Department
22 of Technology, shall participate in CPUC proceedings to oppose the reduction of minimum
23 standards for basic telephone service.
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