

Assembly Bill 470: Facts Over Fiction

Sticking to the Facts on AB 470

Assembly Bill 470, authored by Assemblymember Tina McKinnor, is a responsible, balanced approach to modernizing California's communications network, while ensuring no one is left behind during the transition. Developed through extensive input from policymakers and stakeholders, AB 470 will reform the state's Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) policy, while protecting consumers, preserving access to essential voice services, strengthening public safety, and moving California forward.

☒ MYTH: **MYTH: If AB 470 passes, customers will lose access to copper landlines immediately.**

✓ **FACT:** **Absolutely not. Current copper legacy voice services will be maintained until new technologies are available that are proven to be equally or more reliable and affordable, preserving access to critical voice services.**

AB 470 requires the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to determine geographic areas classified as "well-served." Modernization will only be permitted in areas that are unpopulated and without customers, or designated as "well-served," meaning:

- At least three alternative voice services are available, including:
 - At least one alternative must be a wireline provider,
 - At least one alternative must participate in the discounted California LifeLine program,
 - An alternative is available to all broadband-serviceable locations in the area.
- **In areas not identified as "well-served," nothing changes, and the law remains in effect.** This provision addresses stakeholder input, ensuring different geographic areas transition at a pace reflecting their unique needs.

Ultimately, the CPUC will have authority and responsibility to approve amended status requests based on the criteria set out in AB 470. This provision ensures rigorous regulatory oversight as California transitions to a more modern communications network.

☒ MYTH: **MYTH: For amended status areas, what if all alternative providers leave and stop providing voice services? Customers will lose access to critical communications options.**

✓ **FACT:** In the unlikely event all providers exit a "well-served" area, leaving no alternatives, AB 470 includes a safety net that requires the prior COLR to return and provide alternative voice service to affected customers. **This provision underscores commitments to maintaining access to reliable, affordable voice services.**

☒ MYTH: **MYTH: AB 470 only benefits large telecommunications providers, not consumers.**

✓ **FACT:** **AB 470 incentivizes investment in California and contains robust consumer protections,** including establishing multiple opportunities to challenge a provider's request to amend their COLR status. Challenges can be reviewed by an independent third-party, and any third-party to conduct the review will be selected by the CPUC. Challenges are also paid for by the provider seeking to amend their COLR status.

Additionally, AB 470 directs the CPUC to conduct a thorough process to verify access to alternative voice services, and requires the commission to create a public notice process. AB 470 also provides funding for public education programs, along with other grants and transition assistance to ensure a thoughtful, incremental and informed process.

☒ MYTH: **MYTH: AB 470 is bad for California.**

✔ **FACT:** **AB 470 incentivizes investment in fiber and wireless networks so more Californians can connect.** Current regulations discourage investment in modern networks like fiber and wireless. Updating these regulations helps ensure critical communications infrastructure investment supports those services that Californians use today and into the future. AB 470 updates those policies that support needed investment in fiber and wireless networks while protecting those customers who rely on old copper-based landline services. **AB 470 is a balanced solution that incentivizes investment while ensuring no Californians are left behind.**

☒ MYTH: **MYTH: Many older Californians still rely on copper-based landlines.**

✔ **FACT:** Many older adults already have updated home phone technologies, including options that operate and look like traditional copper landlines. Furthermore, **only 5% of California households still subscribe to copper-based home phone service** – a number that continues to decline.

The years-long transition process outlined in AB 470 will lead to improved connectivity for older adults. Modern technologies can create meaningful daily life improvements and expand access to services that aren't available through landlines, like telehealth, meal delivery, and much more.

☒ MYTH: **MYTH: Copper landlines are safer during public safety emergencies, including during wildfires.**

✔ **FACT:** First responders rely on the internet and mobile broadband networks to send real-time messages, videos, and location data, improving decision-making and cutting response times. Moreover, when evacuation orders are issued, mobile devices keep residents connected to emergency personnel and life-saving updates.

AB 470 was developed through extensive input from public safety officials to ensure network modernization strengthens emergency communications and response. In addition to ensuring no impact on Land Mobile Radio systems used by first responders, the bill requires the CPUC to involve the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) in the amended status proceedings. AB 470 also requires providers fund public safety agencies' migration to advanced infrastructure, including providing funding to Tribal nations, community-based organizations and local governments to be used on outreach and awareness, with a focus on residents in high-risk areas. To the extent feasible, the bill also requires that replacement voice services are compatible with home alarm systems, medical alert devices and point-of-sale terminals.

☒ MYTH: **MYTH: AB 470 will harm rural communities, leaving them without access to critical voice services.**

✔ **FACT:** AB 470's modernization framework ensures that rural communities retain access to reliable voice service in their homes, including the ability to access critical 9-1-1 services.

In areas that do not meet the "well-served" threshold, existing COLR regulations remain fully intact. Nothing changes, and legacy copper services will continue to be maintained, ensuring these communities maintain access.

By modernizing state law, AB 470 will accelerate investments in high-speed internet, fiber, wireless and other advanced technologies throughout the state, including rural and underserved communities.

☒ **MYTH:** **MYTH: Newer products and services are not affordable. AB 470 is bait-and-switch, meant to enrich company shareholders, leaving customers to foot the bill.**

✔ **FACT:** AB 470 is not a bait-and-switch. As part of the “well-served” test, AB 470 requires that three alternative voice services are available, and at least one of the alternative providers must participate California’s discounted LifeLine program. The bill also ensures that consumers have access to a voice service option at prices comparable to traditional Plain Old Telephone Service (POTS), and providers must also offer an affordable broadband plan to eligible customers in each amended status area.

Traditional copper landline service can cost around \$70 per month, compared to just \$45 per month for modern internet-based and wireless alternatives. Beyond the cost savings, newer technologies offer enhanced functionality, including access to telehealth, texting, video calls, high-speed internet, and more.

☒ **MYTH:** **MYTH: Despite what proponents say, this bill does nothing to prepare the state for the future.**

✔ **FACT:** AB 470 positions the state for long-term connectivity and workforce readiness, requiring providers to:

- Expand modern communications access for hundreds of thousands of residential customers in California,
- Fund labor development, skills training, and community-based digital literacy programs.

AB 470 also legally binds providers to fulfill commitments and empowers the CPUC to enforce these commitments. If a provider fails to meet any obligation, the CPUC has the authority to force remedy.

By modernizing our communications network, AB 470 will help bridge the digital divide and promote the deployment of more reliable, affordable technologies, ensuring a more connected California.

☒ **MYTH:** **MYTH: Copper technology has been used for a long time. It’s just as durable as fiber during natural disasters.**

✔ **FACT:** **Copper networks are becoming increasingly vulnerable**, leading to frequent service disruptions. Copper is also susceptible to moisture, corrosion, and temperature fluctuations. **The aging network is also a prime target for theft**, causing extended outages and wreaking havoc. AB 470 will transition the state to more reliable, modern technologies, like **fiber, which is more resilient, durable, and much faster to repair** after natural disasters and extreme weather.

☒ **MYTH:** **MYTH: AB 470 is only supported by telecommunications providers.**

✔ **FACT:** **More than 120 organizations strongly support AB 470.** Californians for a Connected Future (CCF) is a broad, bipartisan coalition of social justice advocates, Tribal and community leaders, veterans, non-profits, ethnic businesses, education, youth services and disability rights champions. A full coalition list can be found, here: caconnectedfuture.org/our-coalition/

VOTE YES ON ASSEMBLY BILL 470!