

Reply from Jeff Irwin re Landline Phone Bill

Thank you for contacting me about Senate Bill 636; I appreciate you taking the time to contact me on this issue. This bill would revise the procedures for the discontinuance of landline telephone service after December 31, 2016. **The utility would be required to provide a 90 day notice to customers of the proposed service cancellation.** Customers would then have the opportunity to request an investigation by MPSC as to the service cancellation.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) also reviews this type of service cancellation, and supporters of the bill argue the bill removes a redundant regulatory hurdle to technological upgrades. Also, under current law, phone companies are required to maintain service to areas even if they have no customers there. The cost of maintaining that service is borne by all the utility's customers.

I have heard concerns from many of my constituents, however, that eliminating landlines could harm customers. I am currently working to address those concerns with changes to the bill. Unlike Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) connections, landlines can be used in power outages and for pacemaker electronic reporting. **I want to ensure that new technology can and will meet the needs of customers who depend on these capabilities.** In addition, some municipalities may not be set up to automatically detect 911 callers' addresses on VoIP connections. That safety concern must be addressed by state and federal safeguards.

While **I understand the need to transition to newer types of infrastructure for better service and cost savings,** I do have concerns that must be addressed if the measure is to earn my support. Currently, SB 636 is in the House Energy and Technology Committee, where it may be amended or changed substantially, hopefully for the better. Given that the final bill may look much different than the current version, I do not think it prudent to make a final decision on the SB 636 until I see the final version that comes to a vote on the House floor which I anticipate to be later this week. I appreciate your input, and will certainly keep it in mind as this bill moves through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

Representative Jeff Irwin

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