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April 25, 2016

County of Nevada
Board of Supervisors
950 Maidu Avenue
Nevada City, CA 95959

DATE OF MEETING: May 10, 2016

SUBJECT: Letter opposing Assembly Bill 2395 – Telecommunications, replacement of public switched telephone network

RECOMMENDATION: Approve the attached letter.

FUNDING: Not applicable

BACKGROUND:

Assembly Bill 2395, which is sponsored by AT&T, was introduced by Assembly Member Evan Low (D-Silicon Valley) earlier this year. AB 2395 provides that starting in 2020, a phone company could discontinue landline service so long as an alternative service is "available" in the area. Telephone companies would have three years to educate the public about alternative phone services.

The primary purpose of AB 2395 is to allow a mechanism for legacy carriers to relinquish their decades-old obligations that guarantee basic two-way telephone service via a landline. On the surface, AB 2395 offers consumers the promise of an alternative telecom service, often available through Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) or Internet Protocol (IP) and/or wireless services. However, "availability" is not the same as accessibility. The utilities offer alternative services in our area, but these services primarily rely on fiber or broadband-based networks that are either unavailable due to line-of-sight or topographical constraints; or too costly to deploy in rural communities.

Legacy telephone carriers would be required to meet certain thresholds before a relinquishment; however the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) is concerned the bill does not ensure alternatives are affordable, provide good quality-of-service, and remain viable over the long-term.

On Wednesday, April 20, the Assembly Utilities & Commerce Committee approved this controversial measure, with Assembly Member Brian Dahle voting "no." AB 2395 will now be reviewed in the Assembly Appropriations Committee in the coming weeks. RCRC is urging member counties to formally oppose AB 2395 at their earliest convenience. Once a large contingent of RCRC-member counties have formally opposed the bill, RCRC staff will launch a coordinated media strategy to support the advocacy efforts in late May. Therefore, I request your approval of the attached letter.

Sincerely,


Nathan H. Beason
Supervisor, District 1

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