



# CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

## Fighting for Illinois Consumers

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
May 25, 2017

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### TOP WATCHDOG URGES ILLINOIS HOUSE TO FIX AT&T LEGISLATION

A day after AT&T-backed legislation passed the state Senate, the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) urged the Illinois House to fix the measure, which would begin a process to strip landline customers of a reliable connection to emergency services and increase the phone giant's profit margins.

On Thursday, CUB called on people to fight the current version of the legislation, which passed the Senate 56-2 Wednesday. Illinoisans can contact members of the House at [SaveOurPhoneService.com](http://SaveOurPhoneService.com), or by calling AARP Illinois' Telecommunications Hotline, at **1-844-220-5552**.

"The Illinois House has an excellent opportunity to protect our most vulnerable customers and create a better plan for our telecom future," said Bryan McDaniel, CUB director of governmental affairs. "We hope the House can craft legislation that gives us greater access to reliable telecom and broadband services."

Senate Bill 1381 would abolish the state requirement that AT&T offer traditional landline phone service. That would set in motion a process that would eventually allow the company to send "cease to offer" notices to its 1.2 million business and residential landline customers in Illinois. The legislation would also increase phone rates for current customers by allowing AT&T to eliminate the low-cost "Consumer's Choice" local calling plans.

The legislation follows a national business model for AT&T, which has made about \$58 billion in profits over the last five years. The company is pushing customers onto services that are better for its profit margins, but tend to be less reliable, like wireless and Internet-based phones. SB 1381 poses a serious public safety concern for people who depend on landlines as their best connection to 911, medical monitoring services and home security systems.

Even people who don't own landlines should oppose the legislation. The bill does nothing to require AT&T to modernize its network. Also, by decimating the state Telecommunications Act, the bill would transfer the authority to protect phone customers from Illinois to the Federal Communication Commission. That means Illinois would give up any leverage to win other telecom-related fixes from AT&T, like improving broadband access and speed.

"AT&T dismisses landline users as a small percentage of its customer base, but it serves more than a million landline customers, and this isn't about percentages, it's about people," McDaniel said. "AT&T's phone network has been paid for many times over by its customers, and now the company wants to pad its profits by pushing those same people onto phone service that tends to be less reliable. But the House can hold the company accountable and strengthen Illinois' telecom future."

CUB is Illinois' leading nonprofit utility watchdog organization. Created by the Illinois Legislature, CUB opened its doors in 1984 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers. Since then, CUB has saved consumers more than \$20 billion by helping to block rate hikes and secure refunds. For more information, call CUB's Consumer Hotline at 1-800-669-5556 or visit [www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org](http://www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org).

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