



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

For Immediate Release
June 1, 2017

Contact: Jim Chilsen
(o) 312-263-4282, (c) 312-513-1784

CUB STATEMENT ON AT&T DEREGULATION LEGISLATION

“We’re disappointed but we’re not giving up. We urge the governor to veto this legislation. Number one, we think AT&T is doing a disservice to its most vulnerable customers who need traditional landlines for a reliable connection to emergency services like 911. Secondly, this bill does nothing to require AT&T to improve its network. In fact, it strips Illinois of key authority to push AT&T to make other telecom-related improvements—like faster broadband. This bill allows AT&T and the federal government to dictate our telecom future, and that’s bad news for all Illinois consumers, from people who need landlines to smartphone users.”

Background

*On May 31, 2017, Senate Bill 1839 passed the Illinois House 81-27-2, and the Illinois Senate, 53-3-1. The measure now goes to Gov. Bruce Rauner’s desk.

*SB 1839 strips the Illinois Telecommunications Act of key consumer protections. It allows AT&T to stop offering traditional landline phone service once the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) gives final approval to such a transition. The legislation also increases phone rates by allowing AT&T to eliminate the low-cost “Consumer’s Choice” local calling plans.

*AT&T has 1.2 million business and residential landline customers, including people who depend on traditional home phone service as their most reliable connection to family, friends, 911, medical monitoring services, and home security systems.

*The legislation follows a national business model for AT&T, which has made about \$58 billion in profits over the past five years. The company has been pushing customers onto services that are better for its profit margins, but tend to be less reliable, like wireless and Internet-based phones.

*Even though the legislation has passed the Illinois General Assembly, the end of landline service and the Consumer’s Choice plans will not be immediate. The legislation still has to be signed by the governor, and AT&T needs final FCC permission to end landline service once and for all. AT&T would then be required to warn consumers about any change in service months ahead of time.

CUB is Illinois’ leading nonprofit utility watchdog group. 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 details, call CUB’s Consumer Hotline at 1-800-669-5556 or visit CUB’s award-winning website, www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org.

###

www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org

309 W. Washington St., Suite 800, Chicago, IL 60606
Phone (312) 263-4282 | Toll Free 800-669-5556 | Fax (312) 263 4329