

Do you care if your telephone connects?

If so, the California Public Utilities Commission wants to hear from you at a Public Participation Hearing!

Friday July 15th, 2:30pm at Mendocino County Board of Supervisors' chamber in Ukiah

Saturday July 16th, 1:00pm at Karuk Tribe Council chamber in Happy Camp

Monday July 18th, 5:00pm at Eureka City Hall, City Council chamber in Eureka

CPUC public notices here:

<http://docs.cpuc.ca.gov/SearchRes.aspx?DocTypeID=9&Latest=1%22%20title=%...>

In rare hearings for the Redwood Coast region, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will be convening in Mendocino, Humboldt and Siskiyou Counties asking for public participation to inform two formal proceedings relating to basic telephone connections - one issue focuses on "call completion" and basic reliability of plain old telephone service, the other focus is on the Lifeline program which supports universal service for low income people statewide.

The CPUC wants to hear local experiences with reliability of phone service and access to essential communications for remote rural, micropolitan and low income communities.

Access Humboldt will be televising the public participation hearings and executive director Sean McLaughlin released the following statement:

"The CPUC hearings are important because reliable local phone connections are critical during emergencies and disasters - and every day they help to build resilient communities. We recognize that remote rural communities often rely upon these 'carriers of last resort' to reach family, neighbors, community organizations and government services. And the daily challenges for low income folks make basic connections even more difficult to afford - so Lifeline support is also essential.

"Further, the design and operation of these networks should meet local needs and interests, many of which are also supported with investments by local taxpayers through government agencies and community anchor institutions such as libraries, schools, public safety entities, and community-based organizations. Unfortunately, communications infrastructure in Humboldt County is mostly held by absentee owners who are not accountable to local communities. So we need the CPUC to ensure that the public interest is secured and that consumers are protected. We call on the CPUC to support localism, require universal access to reliable open networks, and to enforce the existing social contract that has allowed local incumbent phone companies to flourish while also requiring them to meet local needs and interests."

Regina Costa with The Utility Reform Network (TURN.org), an intervenor in the proceedings, shared this statement:

"Reliable phone service that works when you need it the most is vitally important, especially in rural areas. These public hearings are a key opportunity for folks in Mendocino, Humboldt and Siskiyou counties to tell public officials about your service - does it work, are there any problems, do cell phones work in your area?"

"Also, the hearings in Happy Camp and Eureka will be an opportunity for Lifeline customers to raise issues and ask questions - do you know about Lifeline service, have you had problems signing up, do you know about cell phone Lifeline service, is cell phone Lifeline service in your area? Information from the hearings can be used by the CPUC to improve phone service for rural customers. It's crucial for the San Francisco-based commission to hear from folks on the North Coast - they need to know about a problem so that it can be fixed."

If you are going to testify - consider these questions:

Should everyone, including remote rural areas have access to voice, text and internet services?

Why and how?

Have you experienced any problems with call completion? (describe and explain how it impacted you)

Is wireless service comparable or equivalent to landline service in meeting local needs?

How can public safety connections be more reliable?

What is the role of local community anchors and local communication networks for community resilience through disasters and emergencies?

-Are you familiar with the Lifeline program?

-Did you know low income folks can get wireless lifeline?

-Do you know what companies - phone companies, other landline companies or wireless carriers - provide Lifeline in their area?

-Does wireless service work in the area or is it not a real option?

- Are people having problems being certified or recertified for Lifeline?

-For customers with Lifeline, what is their experience with the program?

Access Humboldt is a non-profit, community media organization formed in April 2006 to manage local cable franchise benefits on behalf of the County of Humboldt, California and the Cities of Eureka, Arcata, Fortuna, Rio Dell, Ferndale and Blue Lake.

Community media resources of Access Humboldt include: cable access TV channels; a wide area broadband network with dedicated optic fiber connections to twenty locations serving local jurisdictions, educational institutions and other public facilities; broadband access wireless networks; a Community Media Center with studio and other production equipment and training on the Eureka High School campus; and ongoing operational support for public, educational and governmental access media services from franchised cable operator, Suddenlink Communications.

Access Humboldt's Board of Directors convenes regular public meetings, provides local accountability and sets governing policy to guide the organization

For more information contact: Sean McLaughlin, e: sean@accesshumboldt.net, c: 707-616-2381

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Sean McLaughlin
Executive Director
Access Humboldt
P.O. Box 157, Eureka, CA 95502
tel: 707-476-1798
cel: 707-616-2381
DC: 202-495-0616
e: sean@accesshumboldt.net

Visit our Website <http://accesshumboldt.net>
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and Twitter <http://twitter.com/accesshumboldt>

"Local Voices Through Community Media"

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