

Legislation Threatens Access to Emergency Services in California's Rural Counties

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The Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) has announced opposition to Assembly Bill 2395 (Low), which seeks to establish a process for legacy phone carriers to relinquish their decades-old obligations that guarantee basic telephone service. To date, 17 of California's rural counties have joined in this opposition, and urge the Legislature to carefully consider the implications this legislation would have on the safety, affordability, quality, and viability of telecommunications services to rural Californians.

“As a former County Sheriff with 28-years in law enforcement I know firsthand the importance of landline phone service in California's rural counties,” said Lee Adams, RCRC Immediate Past Chair and Sierra County Supervisor. “The deployment and expansion of modern telecommunication networks in rural and remote areas remains a priority for RCRC member counties, however, modern communications systems are either non-existent, unreliable, or cost-prohibitive in rural California. As a result, traditional landline phone service remains the backbone and most reliable two-way communication mode in many of our rural communities.”

California currently employs a carefully-crafted scheme to ensure universal access to traditional telephone service at an affordable rate. This scheme includes critical consumer protections regarding public safety, affordability, quality, and viability of telecommunications services in rural counties. While RCRC recognizes that this model needs to be reviewed and potentially altered to accommodate for other modes of communication, any alterations must be conducted in a manner that contains fail-safe mechanisms that ensure basic communication tools remain unequivocally viable, and includes an opportunity to ensure more advanced telecommunications infrastructure can continue to replace outdated modes.

Additionally, while the legislation requires that a legacy phone carrier meet certain thresholds before a relinquishment of their landline obligations, of utmost concern in the relinquishment scenario is that rural communities would be left with little or no opportunity to see an investment in modern, alternative infrastructures – essentially leaving RCRC's member counties further behind than before. Additionally, RCRC questions both the viability of replacement, and service quality of replacement, should relinquishment occur.

For detailed information on AB 2395, including opposition letters from RCRC and its member counties, background information on the legislation, and additional opposition viewpoints, visit RCRC's AB 2395 Hot Issues webpage, accessed [here](#).

ABOUT RCRC

The Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC) is a thirty-five member county strong service organization that champions policies on behalf of California's rural counties. RCRC is dedicated to representing the collective unique interests of its membership, providing legislative and regulatory representation at the State and Federal levels, and providing responsible services for its members to enhance and protect the quality of life in rural California counties. To learn more about RCRC, visit rcrcnet.org and follow @RuralCounties on Twitter.

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