

Opposition to SB-469/AB-696 Telecommunications Deregulation Legislation

To: Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities

From: CenturyLink,
Communication Workers of America Union Local 4603,
Citizens Utility Board,
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups,
National Federation of Independent Businesses,
Sprint,
Wisconsin Grocers Association

We strongly oppose the very broad and far reaching deregulation legislation proposed in SB-469/AB-696. The legislation is deficient in providing consumer protections and a level competitive playing field that would be beneficial to all--including both consumers and businesses--in both urban and rural areas.

Such far reaching deregulation must:

- Serve both business and residential customer interests.
- Maximize access to broadband, including in rural areas.
- Encourage economic development and the creation of jobs and investment.
- Benefit everyone and not just a select few major telecommunication providers.
- Ensure consumer protection and competition that benefits the end-user customer.
- Provide that rates will remain reasonable and affordable.
- Achieve balanced and comprehensive access reform with deregulation that protects consumers, promotes broadband investment and a robust telecom network.
- Ensure continued landline infrastructure build and maintenance in both urban and rural areas.
- Ensure protection of current service levels, particularly in rural areas.

In addition to these substantive policy concerns, many groups did not have the opportunity to provide input on the legislation, which was introduced late in the process. As a result, amendments are still being offered that will affect many issues, will be difficult to review, and will impact thousands of consumers. This legislation and its

amendments have not received the endorsement or support of the Public Service Commission.

The Legislature and the telecommunications industry must provide comprehensive reform that will benefit all of the citizens of Wisconsin, maintain reasonable rates, provide residential and business access to broadband, and include all interested parties in a collaborative effort to maximize the adoption of technology that benefits economic development, healthcare, and education.

PLEASE VOTE NO ON ASSEMBLY BILL 696.