

Why wireless industry bill is a triple rip-off for Californians

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Imagine if a private company decided to place a bunch of equipment on your house and offered you pennies on the dollar to “rent” your roof space. Now imagine that you didn’t have the right to say “no.”

This is what the wireless industry is proposing for local governments in California with [Senate Bill 649](#). The only difference is that this equipment will be attached to the streetlight in front of your home or business.

SB 649 – introduced by Sen. Ben Hueso, a San Diego Democrat and set to be heard by the Assembly Local Government Committee on Wednesday – would eliminate public input for locating and installing antennas as large as 6 cubic feet and equipment boxes the size of a refrigerator on streets and traffic lights in your neighborhood.

Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile and Sprint are pushing this legislation because they want to be able to put their equipment wherever they want, while not paying a fair share to offset community impacts.

Removing visual blight is important to our residents, who often work for years to beautify their neighborhoods. Cities and counties go through great expense to put unsightly poles and wires underground. SB 649, however, would undo those efforts by forcing local governments to make space available to allow this unsightly equipment.

The bill also caps how much local governments can charge the wireless industry in leases – a taxpayer subsidy with no guarantee to reduce the price of service to their customers. So SB 649 is a triple-rip-off: Neighborhoods lose flexibility to address visual blight, taxpayers get shorted by limits on lease revenues and residents still pay the same high prices for their wireless services. At the same time, these providers still won’t serve many of California’s disadvantaged communities.

There is no documented problem that requires the Legislature to intervene, and no demonstrable reason to take away local governments’ input into wireless siting and installation decisions. Cities and counties throughout California negotiate market rate leases that help pay for essential services such as police, fire, parks and libraries. Some

local governments offer free access to select property in exchange for a host of public benefits, such as network access for their emergency services or public parks.

We recognize that the wireless industry offers many benefits in our growing economy, but that must be balanced with local input. SB 649 is the wrong approach. It benefits corporate bottom lines rather than communities, silences our local voice and negates a fair return for use of public infrastructure.

For these reasons, the California State Association of Counties, League of California Cities, and Rural County Representatives of California have joined efforts to oppose SB 649.

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