

Rural Counties Applaud Assemblyman Dahle

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Lee Adams, Sierra County Supervisor
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I'd like to applaud Assemblyman Brian Dahle (R-Bieber) for his leadership on a controversial telecommunications measure authored by Assemblyman Evan Low from the Silicon Valley.

Assembly Bill 2395 addresses "legacy phone service," and provides a process for legacy carriers to relinquish their decades-old obligations that guarantees basic telephone service. The measure is dangerous for rural California and Dahle recognizes the potential impacts to residents of the North State.

On the surface, AB 2395 offers consumers the promise of alternative telecom service. These services, however, primarily rely on fiber or broadband-based networks often non-existent and too costly to deploy in rural communities. And, while the bill attempts to require legacy telephone carriers to meet certain thresholds before such a relinquishment, there are concerns that the bill does not ensure alternatives are affordable, provide good quality-of-service or will remain viable over the long-term.

In addition, AB 2395 interferes with the safety and basic needs of rural Californians by doing away with their most reliable way to reach emergency services, leaving vulnerable citizens without reliable phone service, and ultimately forcing low-income residents into costly mobile and digital services.

Last week, the Assembly Utilities and Commerce Committee approved the measure, with Dahle and two other legislators voting in opposition. The measure moves to the Assembly Appropriations Committee in the coming weeks.

As the immediate past chair of the Rural County Representatives of California, I am shocked by the disregard of the potential impacts this legislation would have upon California's rural residents. RCRC's 35-member counties comprise more than 52 percent of the state's total land mass, and are home to more than 3.4 million residents.

However, the secondary impacts that state legislation can have upon our rural counties are often overlooked, leaving rural county residents ill-prepared, ill-equipped and lacking necessary resources. On behalf of my RCRC colleagues, I applaud Dahle for his leadership on this issue, and many other issues of importance to California's often forgotten rural counties.

Lee Adams is a Sierra County supervisor.

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