

**U. S. House of Representatives**  
**Washington, D. C. 20515**

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February 27, 2014

The Honorable Tom Wheeler, Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 Twelfth Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

Last year, several members of the House Subcommittee on Communications and Technology wrote to seven of the largest wireless and wireline communications providers regarding their use of below-the-line fees on the monthly bills of consumers. The findings of the inquiry suggest that the use of such fees is widespread, and when consumers sign up for service they are usually buried in small print.

We believe consumers deserve greater transparency and disclosure prior to signing-up for service, as well as on their monthly bill. Our experience from examining the websites of these providers is that consumers cannot easily obtain a total estimate of their first month's bill, including all taxes, fees and surcharges, prior to entering personal information, such as name, social security number and credit card information. Given that the combination of such charges can add as much as 42 percent to a consumer's monthly bill, we believe that further examination by the FCC is warranted.

Additionally, after signing a service contract, we think consumers should have certainty in what they will *actually* pay each and every month during the life of their contract. We understand that the FCC has examined "bill shock," but this has typically focused on consumer-generated fees, such as unanticipated roaming or data charges. Consumers appear to have little recourse when company-imposed below-the-line fees are added or increased while a subscriber is already under contract. There should be a thorough examination of this practice to ensure consumers can more accurately assess the true cost of fulfilling a multi-year service contract.

We respectfully request that you open a proceeding on the disclosure of below-the-line fees and urge you to work with the nation's communications providers to ensure consumers are able to accurately compare competing services and choose the provider that best meets their needs.

Thank you in advance for your efforts to protect consumers, and we look forward to your timely response to our request.

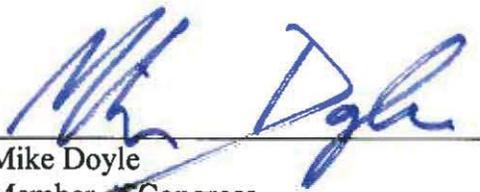
Most gratefully,



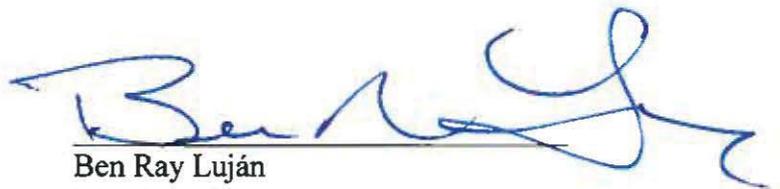
Anna G. Eshoo, Ranking Member  
Communications and Technology Subcommittee  
Energy and Commerce Committee



Howard Coble  
Member of Congress



Mike Doyle  
Member of Congress



Ben Ray Luján  
Member of Congress



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

May 1, 2014

The Honorable Ben Ray Luján  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2446 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Luján:

Thank you for your letter regarding the use of below-the-line fees on wireless and wireline customer bills. Providing consumers with the information and tools they need to understand and control the costs associated with their telecommunications services is an issue that the Commission and I take seriously.

The Commission has twice adopted rules concerning Truth-in-Billing issues. Combined, these rules require customer bills to: (1) be clearly organized, clearly identify the service provider, and highlight any new providers; (2) contain full and non-misleading descriptions of charges that appear in the bill; and (3) contain clear and conspicuous disclosure of any information the consumer may need to make inquiries about, or to contest charges on the bill.

As you noted in your letter, in October 2011, the Commission coordinated a voluntary agreement under which the large US wireless service providers send free, automated usage-based alerts that allow subscribers to better monitor and manage the use of their devices and avoid unexpected charges, known as bill shock, both at home and abroad. On April 17, 2013, the Commission announced that 97% of all wireless consumers across the country are thus protected from bill shock. I have also asked staff to reassess the record from a 2009 *Notice of Inquiry* on consumer billing issues and evaluate the current state of consumer complaints and comments on below-the-line fees.

At this time, all options are on the table on next steps, which range from expanding consumer education efforts to refreshing the record and opening a new proceeding. I look forward to working with you and keeping you informed of the Commission's actions on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler".

Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

May 1, 2014

The Honorable Mike Doyle  
U.S. House of Representatives  
239 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Doyle:

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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

May 1, 2014

The Honorable Anna Eshoo  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Eshoo:

Thank you for your letter regarding the use of below-the-line fees on wireless and wireline customer bills. Providing consumers with the information and tools they need to understand and control the costs associated with their telecommunications services is an issue that the Commission and I take seriously.

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