



## **Telephone Deregulation Legislation Will Harm Consumers**

*Statement of Charlie Higley, Executive Director*

April 7, 2010

“The Citizens Utility Board strongly opposes telephone deregulation legislation AB 696 & SB 469.

“Although there are over 4 million cellphones in Wisconsin, there are still over 3 million landlines, which means hundreds of thousands of households and thousands of businesses still rely on landline service. AB 696 & SB 469 would repeal almost all of the consumer protections provided by the Public Service Commission regarding landline service. With this radical deregulation legislation, telephone utilities like AT&T:

- would no longer need to provide reasonable service at reasonable rates;
- would no longer need to file financial information with the PSC, allowing them to evade appropriate regulation and charge whatever they want for service;
- could change telephone rates or stop providing service at their discretion;
- would no longer need to maintain important equipment and facilities, such as the lines going to homes and businesses;
- could charge customers discriminatory rates for similar service, thus favoring preferred customers while charging everyone else higher rates;

“This legislation was largely written by AT&T. Many businesses and organizations, including CUB, had no input on the legislation.

“Given these concerns, I urge lawmakers to vote against AB 696 and SB 469.”

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The Citizens Utility Board of Wisconsin is a member-supported, nonprofit organization that advocates for reliable and affordable utility service on behalf of residential, farm, and small business customers of electric, natural gas, and telecommunication utilities before the Legislature, regulatory agencies, and the courts.