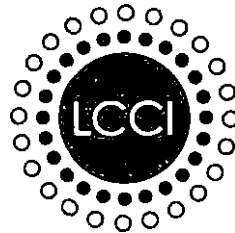


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THE LANCASTER  
CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

Comments from Thomas T. Baldrige  
President & CEO  
The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry

on  
"The 717 Area Code Shortage"

Docket Number: P-2015-2510230

Submitted to the  
Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission

Commonwealth Keystone Building  
Hearing Room 1  
400 North State Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

August 9, 2016

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Hello, I am Tom Baldrige, President & CEO of The Lancaster Chamber of Commerce & Industry, an organization made up of 2,100 area companies representing nearly 118,000 employees – or half of the County's workforce.

Thank you for seeking comments and holding public hearings to solicit feedback on potential changes in phone numbers in the 717 area-code. Your outreach clearly demonstrates your interest in hearing from those that are impacted and, for that, you are to be commended.

It is our understanding that the state predicts the 717 area code will run out of serviceable numbers by the fall of 2018 and that there are two broad solutions on the table:

1. An "overlay" throughout the entire 717 region in which new numbers would get a new area code and all calls would require 10-digit dialing; or
2. A "split" where boundaries would be drawn and part of the region would remain 717, while the other part would get a new area code. Further, it is our understanding that this "split" into new area codes could require all of Lancaster County to get a new area code.

We had previously surveyed our members and provided testimony on this issue. At the time, our business members were more favorable to the overlay option. Generally speaking, the reason many businesses support this option is because they believe it will be the least disruptive and won't financially burden their business.

I'd like to share a few of the comments from those who supported the overlay:

- Another member adds that she's been through the change in Chester County and it was only a minor inconvenience. She says dialing 10-digits rather than remembering which numbers changed their area codes is the better option.
- Many small business owners wrote to us saying a split would cause undue stress and lead to serious financial hardships for their businesses. A split would mean new letterhead, business cards, advertising, signage and other things may need to be changed.
- A member living in Berks County and working in Lancaster wrote to us saying they have been living with a 10-digit number for close to 20 years and really it's no big deal.

That said, some of our members did prefer the split as they were concerned about confusion and educating people on the change-over. Upon revisiting this issue, there were still concerns about initial confusion, but this felt like less of an issue due to changes in technology and access to information on cell phones.

It is fair to say that a majority of our membership would encourage the PUC to adopt the overlay method. And The Lancaster Chamber would agree.

We believe the overlay method would be most beneficial in the long-run. Businesses would not have to bear the financial burden of changing stationary, signage, marketing materials and other advertising. An overlay provides the fairest strategy and doesn't cause disruption and costs to existing 717 area-code numbers.

Additionally, we believe creating new boundaries and splitting counties would create undue headaches for the PUC and the broader Lancaster and 717 area-code communities.

Please know, however, that we share the concern about educating the public in order to mitigate confusion. We encourage the PUC to look at the education strategies and models used in regions that have already gone through the change-over so the disruption for business and residents alike are kept to a minimum.

The Chamber stands ready to help you explore this issue further and promote a solution when the decision has been made. We have members who are experts in this field, who have been through the change and can offer solid advice. Further, we have a deep reach into the local business community that we would encourage you to consider when looking for ways to get the word out on the change. In short, we are here to help.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments.



THE LANCASTER  
CHAMBER

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