



NEWS FROM THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

FCC Launches Investigations into Suspect Lifeline Providers in California and Other Opt-Out States

WASHINGTON, February 17, 2026—Today, the Federal Communications Commission launched investigations into Lifeline providers for possible violations of program rules in California and other opt-out states. Based on initial reports, it appears that these providers enrolled dead and duplicate subscribers in Lifeline—the program that provides low-income Americans with a discount on their phone and internet service. The FCC’s Enforcement Bureau has sent formal Letters of Inquiry to an initial group of providers operating in states that opted to run their own program eligibility verifications instead of mandating use of the National Verifier.

Chairman Brendan Carr issued the following statement:

“I’ll reiterate: my position is that the government should not be spending your money to provide phone and internet service to dead people. In keeping with this apparently controversial stance, the FCC is cracking down on waste, fraud, and abuse by launching investigations into the apparent enrollment of dead people and duplicate subscribers in this critical connectivity program. California’s efforts to get around federal rules to prevent misuse of federal dollars has already resulted in their being kicked out of the ‘opt-out’ program and now we are launching investigations into the companies that may be facilitating this type of waste, fraud and abuse.”

Additional Background Information:

Today, the FCC announced that its Enforcement Bureau has launched investigations into a number of Lifeline providers for potential program enrollment rule violations. The first step of any such investigation is to send Letters of Inquiry to the providers. These investigations utilize both Bureau investigative tools and the recent [advisory](#) from the FCC’s Office of Inspector General on deceased and duplicate Lifeline subscribers.

Following that Inspector General advisory, Chairman Carr [proposed](#) significant new reforms to strengthen the integrity of the FCC Lifeline rules to enhance program integrity, prevent fraud, and ensure that federal dollars go only to eligible low-income Americans. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking will be voted on by the Commission at [tomorrow’s Open Meeting](#).

In November 2025, the FCC [revoked](#) California’s ‘opt-out’ status and now requires federal Lifeline applicants in California to comply with the federal verification process that applies in nearly every other state. The recent Inspector General Advisory bolsters this decision as it shows California enrolled deceased individuals into the Lifeline program using its own eligibility standards.

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