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June 2, 2026  
Chairman Benjamin Allen  
Senate Energy, Utilities and Communications Committee  
California State Senate  
1021 O Street, Suite 3350  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(sent by electronic mail)

**Re: Free Press Action Strongly Recommends a No Vote on ACA 9**

Senator Allen and Members of the Committee,

Free Press Action<sup>1</sup> submits this letter to urge you to vote no on ACA 9, an amendment to the California constitution that would jeopardize and quite likely eliminate the California Public Utility Commission's ("CPUC") oversight and regulatory authority over broadband telecommunications services, causing irreparable harm to Californians. As a national nonprofit that primarily focuses on federal communications policy, we have seen first hand the harms of the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") abandoning its broadband oversight authority. And as a membership organization with tens of thousands of members in California and a significant staff presence here as well, we understand the importance of this state's role in joint oversight of essential communications networks and services. Fortunately for Californians, the CPUC has a demonstrated record of protecting the interest of our state's broadband users, especially when federal policy makers have chosen not to. We are therefore deeply concerned about the prospect of the CPUC, which has been a leader among state regulators, being stripped of its broadband oversight duties.

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<sup>1</sup> Free Press Action is a nonpartisan, non-profit, nationwide media and technology advocacy organization. It believes that positive social change, racial justice, and meaningful engagement in public life require equitable access to open channels of communication, diverse and independent ownership of media platforms, and journalism that holds leaders accountable. For nearly two decades, it has engaged in litigation, congressional advocacy, and administrative agency proceedings to advance these goals, including cases, legislative hearings, and administrative proceedings concerning the broadband market and its regulation.

We understand that some telecommunications companies take issue with certain CPUC decisions and generally wish to be free from the agency's studious oversight.<sup>2</sup> However, as advocates with decades of experience, we wish to express to the members of the Energy, Utilities and Communications Committee just how impactful the CPUC has been in protecting the interests of California's broadband consumers.<sup>3</sup>

The CPUC has taken steps to protect broadband users from discrimination, to promote broadband competition, to foster universal deployment of high-quality services, and make home internet access more affordable for low-income Californians. The CPUC also has conducted rigorous reviews of massive telecommunications industry mergers, working to ensure that Californians' interests are protected, and attempting to hold carriers to merger commitments these companies make in order to gain approval from antitrust enforcers and communications regulators at the state and federal level.<sup>4</sup> When the Trump administration's FCC abandoned its own regulatory authority, the CPUC was the sole state utility commission to join with 22 states' attorneys generals to fight to preserve federal Net Neutrality consumer protections.<sup>5</sup> At a time when big telecom carriers have convinced other state PUCs to completely abandon regulations that ensure universal access to basic telecom services, the CPUC stood up for the most vulnerable Californians by not rubber stamping AT&T's request to abandon its Carrier of Last Resort ("COLR") obligations in the state.<sup>6</sup> And most recently, the CPUC stood up for

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<sup>2</sup> See e.g. David Shepardson, "AT&T sues California in bid to stop offering traditional phone service," *Reuters* (May 20, 2026).

<sup>3</sup> The CPUC's impact goes well beyond implementing California law and adopting and enforcing its own regulations. The CPUC often shares its expertise with policy makers at the FCC. The CPUC has filed numerous comments in official FCC proceedings, on broadband policy issues ranging from improving the collection of deployment data, reforming universal service subsidy policies, and protecting network neutrality. See, e.g., Comments of the California Public Utilities Commission, WC Docket No. 07-38 (filed July 30, 2009); Comments of the California Public Utilities Commission, WC Docket No. 09-51 (filed June 8, 2009); Comments of the California Public Utilities Commission, WC Docket No. 17-108 (filed July 17, 2017); Comments of the California Public Utilities Commission, WC Docket No. 21-476 (filed Feb. 17, 2022); Comments of the California Public Utilities Commission, WC Docket No. 11-42 (filed May 4, 2026).

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., "CPUC Approves Verizon–Frontier Acquisition with Strong Consumer Protections and Oversight," Press Release, California Public Utilities Commission (Jan. 15, 2026); "CPUC Approves Merger of Sprint and T-Mobile," Press Release, California Public Utilities Commission (Apr. 16, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> "CPUC Comment on Net Neutrality in Advance of D.C. Circuit Court Oral Argument," Press Release, California Public Utilities Commission (Jan. 31, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> "CPUC Rejects ATT Request to Withdraw as Carrier," Press Release, California Public Utilities Commission (June 28, 2024).

low-income Californians against a cynically partisan attack by President Trump's current FCC Chair on the state's administration of the federal Lifeline affordability program.<sup>7</sup>

ACA 9 seems designed to needlessly strip the CPUC of its broadband oversight authority, and make the telecommunications regulatory process more susceptible to industry capture. There is simply no good reason for the state to make such a radical change and to defang one of the country's most pro-consumer state telecom regulatory authorities. Broadband telecommunications services are a critical utility for all Californians, and CPUC is the state's best expert agency to protect and promote the public's interest. We urge all members of the Committee and the California State Senate to vote no on ACA 9.

Sincerely,

S. Derek Turner  
Sr. Advisor  
Free Press Action

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<sup>7</sup> See Letter to Marlene H. Dortch from Ana Maria Johnson, California Public Utilities Commission, WC Docket No. 11-42 (filed Dec. 23, 2025).