



AT&T President Jim Murray: The truth about your landline phone and whether it's going away

Guest writer By **Guest writer**

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By Jim Murray | President, AT&T Michigan

A recent column on MLive (**"Take Away a Senior Citizen's Landline Phone and Confusion will Reign"**) may have scared some people about Senate Bill 636, which would update Michigan regulations to make it easier for phone companies like AT&T to invest in new, more efficient communications services. Unfortunately, the column has misled – even frightened – some people about what the bill would do.



Jim Murray

This legislation will not remove landlines from peoples' homes or businesses. For generations, the wires coming into your house and mine carried one thing: our voice. The wires carried an electric current through huge switching facilities warehoused in our neighborhoods, towns, state and beyond to literally connect by wire one person to another, exactly the way Alexander Graham Bell drew it up 137 years ago.

Today, the Internet powers our ability to communicate. Coming into our homes on that same little wire are voices, emails, photos, videos, the Lions game, the series finale of "Breaking Bad" and "Jeopardy" each night. If you have any of this happening in your home, you've already made the transition. You may not have even known it, but you no longer have a "landline" as it is defined by our state laws or the old, voice-only phone network. You still have the same wire coming into your home and your phone may still be hanging in the exact same place on your kitchen wall, but the content coming through that wire could not be more different. It's not the 19th century coming into your home; it's the 21st.

Related: Landline phone bill passes Michigan Senate despite AARP concerns

So, with SB 636, will you have to give up your home phone and go only with a wireless phone? You could, if you wanted to, and millions of people already have, but you won't have to. You could get a landline phone that's powered by the Internet, a.k.a. VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), or both VoIP and wireless. The choice is yours.

But that really isn't what SB 636 is about. Some of the state rules and regulations about our phones were written before the Internet existed. Before cell phones. Before cable TV. Before email. Updating those laws

will not to remove "landlines" from our homes necessarily, but it will make those lines and our wireless networks work faster, more efficiently and more affordably for everyone.

Hospitals, schools and businesses are already using VoiP technology. Residents like you and me, whether we know it or not, are already using VoiP to watch TV, surf the web, call 911, work from home and communicate with family and friends. In the face of these advances, state law requires investment in a 19th Century system that delivers almost none of these things for Michigan consumers.

Senate bill 636 fixes this. Beginning in 2017, it updates our law to give the Federal Communications Commission, with input from the Michigan Public Service Commission, the authority to decide if providers like AT&T can transition our network to one built on VoiP and wireless technology, a transition millions of residents have already made.

Senate Bill 636 doesn't end the "landline", it does more with that little wire coming into your home than Mr. Bell could have ever imagined.

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