

**MERGERS**

# Groups Want More Affordability Conditions on Charter-Cox Deal in Calif.

The cable companies say the terms they've agreed to match the Verizon-Frontier merger the state approved earlier this year



**Jake Neenan**

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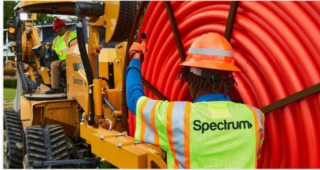


Photo of the Governor Edmund G. "Pat" Brown Building, which houses the California Public Utilities Commission by Akul Saxena/Broadband Breakfast



WASHINGTON, June 22, 2026 – Some advocacy groups in California want the state to tack on more conditions if it approves Charter’s \$34.5 billion acquisition of Cox Communications.

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The companies and parties they settled with urged the state’s utility regulator against new terms. They want the deal approved at the California Public Utilities Commission’s August 13 meeting, one of the agency’s last voting meetings before Justice Department approval of the transaction expires.

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A collection of six consumer advocates including the California Alliance for Digital Equity (CADE) and Digital Equity Los Angeles (DELA) said [in reply comments](#) posted June 17 that the CPUC should impose more stringent affordability requirements if it approves the cable merger.

Charter and Cox already [reached settlement agreements](#) with CalAdvocates, the consumer advocacy office housed within CPUC, and the nonprofit California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF), but the other advocacy groups said last week those didn't go far enough.

The five-year duration of the \$20-per-month plans the companies agreed to "is insufficient given the scale of Charter's post-merger market power, the depth of the affordability crisis documented in the record, and the precedent the Commission has already established," the groups wrote.

The companies agreed to provide those plans to low-income households and participate in California's Lifeline Pilot program, which provides a \$20 monthly broadband discount and would result in free 100 \* 20 megabits per second (Mbps) service for eligible households.

The groups wanted a ten-year commitment, which they said is what Verizon agreed to before its \$20 billion acquisition of Frontier was approved by California earlier this year. Like in Charter and Cox's case, California was the last regulator to approve the deal after other states and federal agencies gave their green lights.

In their [own reply comments](#), Charter and Cox countered that Verizon's Lifeline-specific commitments were five years, the same as theirs. They said Verizon's fixed broadband business could easily be subsidized by its wireless cash flow, whereas the cable giant was still by comparison a smaller company that would take a bigger financial hit from a longer price cap.

The six advocacy groups wanted the cable operators to spend more money

advertising the low-income plans, saying the \$300,000 annually for five years they committed to was insufficient. Charter and Cox also pointed to the Verizon/Frontier merger on that issue, where the CPUC [approved the same](#) advertising spending.

Verizon's final merger conditions in the state included some rural deployment commitments beyond what the carrier had wanted, but broadly aligned with the settlement agreements the company reached, which were also with CalAdvocates and CETF.

[The Utility Reform Network](#) joined the other advocacy groups in asking for more stringent affordability conditions if the CPUC approves the deal. CalAdvocates and CETF [defended their settlement agreements](#) and said their terms were enough to mitigate potential consumer harms from the increased consolidation.

Charter and Cox also agreed in their settlement agreements to spend \$275 million on upgrading their combined network to 1 Gbps symmetrical speeds and provide \$30 million in support for digital literacy and device subsidy programs, among other things.

## ***Approval timeline***

In a [meeting last month](#) with **Hazel Miranda**, chief of staff for CPUC President **John Reynolds**, Charter representatives asked for a draft decision by July 14 and final approval of the deal at the agency's August 13 voting meeting.

The Justice Department has already cleared the transaction, but its approval expires on Sept. 15. If the CPUC were to approve the merger at its Sept. 3 meeting, that might not provide enough time for the companies to close the deal and formally combine, the companies say.

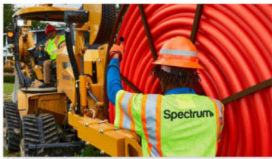
Representatives from the ISPs have been meeting with CPUC staff repeatedly to make that point, including [a June 15 meeting](#) where they made the same points.

If the companies miss the DOJ's window, they'd have to pay another \$2.5 million

filing fee and wait an extra 30 days for the deal to be reviewed again, something they're trying to avoid.

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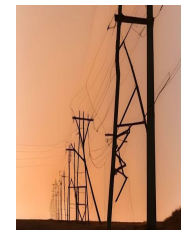
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