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Federal Ramifications Loom for Liberty VI as Bill to Forward Complaints to FCC Passes Senate

Local lawmakers back bill directing action against Liberty VI for inadequate telecom services

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Nelcia Charlemagne **March 26, 2024**

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Liberty VI could face federal ramifications over shoddy service in the territory, with local lawmakers on Monday voting in favor of a bill which directs the Public Services Commission to file an official complaint on behalf of the territory's citizens against Liberty Latin America, Liberty Mobile USVI, and Liberty Mobile Puerto Rico with the Federal Communications Commission.

Bill 35-0247 follows a [less-than-satisfactory update](#) to legislators in January from the telecommunications provider on the status of the migration process following its changeover from AT&T networks. One day before the hearing, the executive director of the Public Services

Commission told the Committee on Government Operations that the PSC was receiving regular complaints about the level of service that customers received from Liberty VI. Problems included dropped calls, delayed text messages, lack of cellular service, system updates, and billing issues.

Liberty VI's country manager, Ravindra Maywahlall — only two weeks into the role at the time of the January hearing — failed to assure senators who attended the hearings that the issues associated with the migration process would be rectified in short order. Senator Samuel Carrion maintained that the poor service was “affecting our quality of life and how we do business here in a territory,” and said that the telecommunications company needed to do more to provide customers with the service they continue to pay for.

Less than a month later, the PSC announced the commencement of an [investigation into Liberty Mobile](#) amid mounting customer dissatisfaction. If Liberty VI is unable to adequately demonstrate a commitment to remedying service issues, regulators signaled they may consider alternative enforcement measures. At the end of February, the company indicated that it was on the threshold of [completing the tumultuous migration process](#).

Nonetheless, Sen. Donna Frett-Gregory's introduction of Bill 35-0247 during the March 25th Legislative Session takes the battle against Liberty VI's service one step further. Addressing her colleagues, Ms. Frett-Gregory shared that “as we speak, Liberty has no customer service representatives in our territory,” meaning that office staff are solely sales personnel. She complained that customers could have to “wait forever” to access help via Liberty's 611 support line. Virgin Islanders, she said, are “stuck between a proverbial rock and a hard place,” and she urged that swift action be taken against a “dangerous unregulated industry in the territory.”

Her bill received overwhelming support from her colleagues. Senator Alma Francis Heyliger noted that customers have been having a “difficult time with communication” since the transition from AT&T to Liberty.” She threatened that “all hell [will] break loose” come April 1st, as Liberty VI promised to complete the migration process by March 31st in their January testimony. Their February statement provided a different timeline, between March and April.

Senator Kenneth Gittens was also in agreement with the proposed legislation, saying that “we owe it to our residents to take a firm stance on Liberty.” He joined Senator Diane Capehart in calling on a second telecommunications provider, Viya, to “pull up [their] socks” as the level of service being received is “totally unacceptable.” He summed up the sentiments of lawmakers, sharing that it was time for providers to reassess service, and “come with proper service for the people of the Virgin Islands.”

The resolution received yes votes from all 12 members present.