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With Service Improving, PSC Approaches FCC Cautiously With Liberty VI Complaint

Despite notable service improvements, the Public Services Commission continues to compile comprehensive data and customer complaints for a thorough FCC filing, aiming to address persistent issues and secure long-term solutions for the territory

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The Public Services Commission says it continues to work diligently on a formal complaint to the Federal Communications Commission on the shoddy state of cellphone service across the territory.

Though the complaints have significantly calmed — a result of increasing service stability — for months, disgruntled Liberty VI customers had complained about dropped calls, delayed text

messages, lack of coverage in some areas, billing issues, system updates and issues with group text messaging. It's an issue that escalated to the territory's lawmaking arm, with legislators demanding that the Liberty VI management team remedy the issue earlier this year. Ravindra Maywahlall, who was new to the role of country manager when he [testified before the Legislature](#) in January, blamed the issues on the migration process from AT&T to Liberty VI's network infrastructure. The PSC later announced an [investigation into Liberty](#) amid mounting complaints.

Since then, Liberty VI has completed the migration process, but that has not stopped the PSC from pursuing federal action. In March, lawmakers voted in favor of Bill 35-0247, which would allow the Public Services Commission to file an official complaint with the FCC on behalf of the territory's citizens against Liberty Latin America, Liberty Mobile USVI, and Liberty Mobile Puerto Rico.

PSC Executive Director Sandra Setorie, told lawmakers on Friday that the Commission is "very carefully moving forward, to try and get the FCC's attention on the situation." According to Ms. Setorie, the PSC is compiling data gathered through listening sessions and direct complaints from customers. But while it may appear that the PSC is lagging in submitting the complaint, Ms. Setorie explained that previous experience with the FCC taught them that they must be "very, very meticulous in the way that you file those complaints."

"If I were to put this politely, [the FCC] dismisses 90% of the complaints they receive on customer service without doing anything at all," the PSC's attorney Boyd Sprehn explained. It's a reality that requires the PSC to craft their complaint with care. "The FCC's position is you should just simply change carriers if you're unhappy with your current one," Mr. Sprehn explained. According to the PSC, in the USVI cell phone carriers are limited, something that the commission hopes will assist in their case. A cursory search of cellular service providers in the USVI turns up several providers, among them T-Mobile, H2O, Liberty V.I., Viya, and Gen Mobile.

"We want to make sure that this is not a complaint that is easily dismissed," Ms. Setorie reassured. But what happens if the FCC ultimately dismisses the complaint anyway? "What is the remedy?" asked Senator Donna Frett-Gregory, who originally sponsored Bill 35-0247. In reply, Attorney Sprehn's explained that while there are avenues to appeal the dismissal in court, there is hardly a remedy for individual customers "shy of trying to sue your carrier."

It's a response that left lawmakers nonplussed. "I don't think that this conversation gives us any hope. That's extremely concerning," Frett-Gregory said. Virgin Islanders, she observed, are "paying a premium dollar for cellphone service" and have largely been impacted by service issues. "There must be a remedy. Whether it's a class action, there must be something that can be done," noted the senator. "We just can't ignore the cries of the people in our community."

While the PSC continues to build what it hopes is a strong case, Ms. Setorie revealed that the commission is considering working with their umbrella association to explore different paths toward a worthwhile remedy to the situation.