



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie to State: Put 315 Area Code Plan ‘On Hold’

PATTY RITCHIE July 8, 2013

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Urges Albany to Find Alternatives to Phone Plan That’s “Ill-Timed” and Unneeded

State Senator Patty Ritchie is urging state regulators to put the brakes on its latest effort to create a new telephone area code for Central and Northern New York, calling current proposals to split the region in two, or create a confusing “overlay” code, “ill-timed” and possibly unnecessary.

The state Public Service Commission is considering plans that would divide the 18-county region into two zones, and impose a new area code on one of them, or “overlay” the new area code across the entire region, and apply it for new numbers only. The latter plan would require residents to dial 10 or 11 digits to complete any calls—local or long distance.

“Considering the state of the region’s economy, local businesses—still recovering from recession—simply cannot afford the additional cost and potential customer loss from this change, and tens of thousands of consumers, who will be forced to dial 10 or 11 digits to reach a nearby town or even their next-door neighbor, should not face this additional inconvenience,” Senator Ritchie said, in a letter she sent to the PSC.

In addition, she said that the PSC has not adequately demonstrated the need for the new area code, citing population decline and the weakened economy, and the fact that hundreds of thousands of available phone numbers still exist within the 315 area.

In her letter, Senator Ritchie pointed to information that showed that as many as 91 phone exchanges—the first three digits in a local phone number—were still unassigned in the 315 area. Each exchange includes up to 10,000 individual phone lines.

Creating a new area code would mean the region would have up to 20 million phone numbers available—“Or as many as 12 phones each for every man, woman and child in the region,” the Senator said, calling that plan “overkill.”

Senator Ritchie also noted that the projected 2015 “exhaust date,” when the PSC says the 315 area will run out of available numbers, is the fourth such estimate in recent years. The PSC previously said the region would run out of numbers in 2002, 2010 and 2013.

“Consumers simply have no reason to believe that this estimate is more accurate than any of the others,” Senator Ritchie said.

Instead of imposing this plan, Senator Ritchie urged the PSC to conduct a further study of available phone numbers, find alternatives to 10- or 11-digit dialing for local calls, and conduct a new round of public hearings, should regulators choose to go ahead with their plans. The PSC last held hearings on the 315 area code issue in 2008.

Senator Ritchie also reminded consumers that they can weigh in on the PSC plan until July 31 by submitting comments [here](#).

A copy of the letter sent by Senator Ritchie can be found [here](#).