

**Item 32**  
**In Language OIR**  
**Remarks of Commissioner Rachelle Chong**  
**January 10, 2007**

In the Consumer Protection Initiative decision last year, the Commission found that it did not have a sufficient record to put specific language requirements on all of California's telecommunications companies. Staff was directed to study the issues raised and then provide a report to the Commission this past fall.

The Commission staff held two workshops and four public meetings across the state to gather information and develop a record on these matters. I was pleased to support the staff's efforts this past summer to develop a detailed record on these issues. After all, California is the most diverse state in the nation. And from our diversity comes strength.

I attended the workshops and the largest public meeting in Stockton. At those meetings, I learned so much about language issues and what is going on out in the real world. There is more to this topic than one would think at first blush.

I was deeply concerned about fraud and misrepresentation issues where bad actors target limited English community members. This is why I am glad we added the 12 new bilingual CAB reps, and the new Telecom Fraud Unit last year. I am glad that we have established specific contacts at CAB for community based organizations to call when they need to report a serious issue like fraud.

I commend all the members of the public who came to share their views on this language issue with us. We listened.

I commend the staff on their excellent language report which resulted from all the research and outreach we did. If you have not read it yet, you should. The staff report included input from our public hearings as well as a tremendous amount of information about the demographics, law, and current industry practices within California. Staff also advised us on best practices of other states and other California agencies.

We learned that in-language practices and needs varied greatly. Some companies provide bills, contracts, and consumer service in a variety of languages, while others provide service only in English because of limited resources or other reasons.

We gained knowledge of principles that may assist the Commission and utilities in developing policies to improve service to limited-English proficient and linguistically isolated consumers.

The report describes research and conclusions to date, includes thirteen recommendations for action, many of which the Commission has already initiated. I commend the staff on speedy action on those items.

Staff anticipated that a formal proceeding would be necessary to determine the need for rules and, if rules are appropriate, the specifics of those rules, but was open to efforts carriers and other stakeholders may make to develop voluntary industry standards that address the problems identified in the report.

I am pleased that we have information to start this rulemaking and enable us to craft rules that will help limited-English proficient consumers. I strongly support the opening of this rulemaking. I hope we can move this rulemaking along quickly and reach a conclusion by June.

Thank you.

