

## Lifeline Reforms

A Lifeline modernization Order being proposed by Chairman Wheeler and Commissioner Clyburn would build on comprehensive protections adopted by the FCC in 2012 against waste, fraud and abuse. Major new protections in the draft Order include the establishment of an independent National Eligibility Verifier as a neutral third party to remove the opportunity for providers to enroll ineligible subscribers. In addition, the Lifeline program would focus on qualifying applicants only through other federal assistance programs that best support the FCC's objectives for the National Verifier: those that support electronic validation, are accountable, and best identify people needing support (SNAP, SSI, Medicaid, Veterans Pension, and Tribal-specific programs.)

These and other reforms add substantially to the FCC's 2012 reforms. Those 2012 reforms include the following fully implemented measures:

- Subscribers must provide documented proof of their eligibility
- Carriers must recertify subscriber eligibility annually
- Clarification that that Lifeline subscriptions are limited to one per household
- Establishment of the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD) to eliminate and prevent duplicate subscriptions
- Independent audits of Lifeline providers every two years
- Tighter standards for certifying new Lifeline providers

Largely as a result of the 2012 reforms, annual Lifeline disbursements have decreased by over 30%, from approximately \$2.2 billion in 2012 to \$1.5 billion in 2015.