



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Psc Announces Public Hearings on 315 Area Code Change

PATTY RITCHIE July 15, 2013

| ISSUE: **TELECOMMUNICATIONS, WIRELESS, CELL PHONES, LANDLINES**

Action came in response to request from Senator Ritchie to let area residents and businesses weigh in on plan

Senator Patty Ritchie announced that the state Public Service Commission has agreed to her request for hearings on its plan to create a new area code for Northern and Central New York communities now served by the 315 area code.

The hearings—including two that will be held in Watertown on August 6th—are being hosted in response to a recent letter Senator Ritchie sent to state regulators, urging them to put the brakes on proposals to split the region in two, or create a confusing “overlay” code. In her letter, Senator Ritchie also requested the PSC hold a new round of public hearings, as the PSC last held hearings on the 315 area code issue in 2008. A copy of the letter can be [viewed here](#).

“Making changes to our region’s area code would have real consequences for businesses—still trying to bounce back from recession—that could incur additional costs or customer loss as a result of having to change their phone number,” said Senator Ritchie. “I am pleased that the PSC will be hosting these public forums to give those who would be affected an opportunity to weigh in on the proposal.”

Hearings, which will be held following one-hour educational forums where the public can learn about proposals from the PSC staff, will be held on the following dates and times:

Utica: August 5, 2013

Utica State Office Building
207 Genesee St.
Utica, NY 13501

Educational forum: 2:00 p.m.

Public statement hearing: 3:00 p.m.

Educational Forum: 6:00 p.m.

Public statement hearing: 7:00 p.m.

Watertown: August 6, 2013

Dulles State Office Building
317 Washington Street
Watertown, NY 13601

Educational forum: 2:00 p.m.
Public statement hearing: 3:00 p.m.

Educational Forum: 6:00 p.m.
Public statement hearing: 7:00 p.m.

Syracuse: August 7, 2013

Senator John J. Hughes State Office building
333 East Washington Street
Syracuse, NY 13202

Educational forum: 2:00 p.m.
Public statement hearing: 3:00 p.m.

Educational Forum: 6:00 p.m.
Public statement hearing: 7:00 p.m.

The PSC 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.

In her recent letter, Senator Ritchie stated that the PSC had 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.

Senator Ritchie also 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.

Those who cannot make the hearings are encouraged to weigh in online at www.dps.ny.gov, by telephone at 1-800-335-2120 or by mail to the following:

Hon. Jeffrey C. Cohen
Acting Secretary
Public Service Commission
Three Empire State Plaza
Albany, NY 12223

All comments must be received by August 16, 2013.

