

Governor Wants Some Guarantees In Landline Deal

Staff, State Capitol

Governor Seeks Comfort Level With Verizon-Frontier

Governor Joe Manchin tells MetroNews he hasn't yet reached a comfort level on the proposed landline deal between Verizon and Frontier.

The governor says his administration has spent a lot of time during the past 10 days speaking with both companies and other interested parties.

Verizon wants to sell all of its landlines to Frontier, which has operated in the state for years, but not at the level of Verizon.

"There's an awful lot of need we have. There's a lot of things that we need done to get broadband and high speed. There's a lot of infrastructure that needs upgraded," Manchin said.

The state Public Service Commission heard four days of testimony last week on the proposal. PSC staff attorneys and the state Consumer Advocate along with labor interests have been against the deal for months concerned about the debt Frontier will incur and the ability of the company to make the advancements needed in the state.

Gov. Manchin says he's also concerned about the jobs of current Verizon workers. He says he wants to make sure they have the ability to work. "I want to make sure (Frontier) and the system that we have is strong enough that it's going to create and give the opportunity for the jobs we need and the service we need to get to the next level," the governor said.

He's not yet ready to come out for or against the deal. "We are very close to putting it together where I would be comfortable and if it doesn't happen I won't be comfortable," Manchin told MetroNews.

State Secretary of Commerce Kelly Goes has been leading the negotiations for the governor. She told members of the House Finance Committee Monday the negotiations are intense.