

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 13, 2016

C. Robert Udell, Jr.
President and Chief Executive Officer
Consolidated Communications Holdings
121 South 17th Street
Mattoon, IL 61938

Dear Mr. Udell:

We are writing about Consolidated Communications' purchase of FairPoint. We very much appreciated it when you said the sale will allow for "advanced solutions and a better experience to customers," and that your company is "well positioned to ensure a smooth transition for customers and employees..."

To be perfectly frank, FairPoint's tenure in Vermont was dismal. We expressed concerns regarding the 2007 sale of Verizon's landline business to FairPoint, and it brings us no joy to say that many of our concerns came to fruition. FairPoint became known in Vermont for poor customer service and failure to build out high-speed internet as promised as a condition of the sale.

Moreover, FairPoint's relationship with its workforce was unnecessarily antagonist. Instead of negotiating a reasonable labor agreement, the company pursued drastic cuts to pay and benefits that led to a four-month strike in 2014-15. Just three months after the strike ended, FairPoint closed its South Burlington call center and laid-off more than seventy unionized workers. Most recently, FairPoint announced last month that it was laying off nearly 10 percent of its remaining workforce, presumably to make the company more attractive for the sale to Consolidated.

Cutting front line workers makes no sense at a time when FairPoint continues to struggle with significant customer service issues. Moreover, it is particularly callous for FairPoint to destroy the livelihoods of loyal workers just as the cold weather approaches and as families prepare to celebrate the holiday season. These workers helped build the company's value, yet they are being discarded as collateral damage of this sale.

We urge you to reverse FairPoint's decision and send the clear message that Consolidated values its workers and the communities in which the company operates. We know the CWA and IBEW welcome the opportunity to work with Consolidated to help make its New England operations successful again. Reversing the layoffs would be a significant demonstration of good faith on the company's part to begin this new chapter.

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
U.S. Senator



Peter Welch
U.S. Congressman