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When the nation's largest electric utility preemptively shut off power last fall to prevent wildfires in California, customers lost more than just their lights — some lost their phones, too.

Washington Post

Data from the Federal Communications Commission shows 874 cellphone towers were offline during an Oct. 27 power shutoff that

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affected millions of people. That included more than half of the cell towers in Marin County alone. The outages mean people who depend solely on cellphones couldn't call 911 or receive emergency notifications, compounding the dangers associated with an unprecedented power outage in an era dominated by wireless communication.

On Wednesday, representatives from AT&T and Verizon are scheduled to testify before state lawmakers about the outages and ways to prevent them. It's the second time state lawmakers will have hauled in private companies to account for the effects surrounding the widespread blackouts in the fall, the largest planned power outages in state history.

In November, lawmakers questioned executives from the state's largest investor-owned utilities, including the leadership of troubled Pacific Gas & Electric, whose equipment has been blamed for sparking the 2018 Camp Fire that killed 85 people and destroyed roughly 19,000 buildings. The company filed for bankruptcy last year.

Telecommunications outages have worsened in recent years as wildfires have become more common and more destructive. A report from the California Public Utilities Commission found 85,000 wireless customers and 160,000 wired customers lost service during the 2017 North Bay Fires. Most recently, the FCC says up to 27% of Sonoma County's wireless cell sites were offline during the Kincade Fire in October.

In advance comments to the legislative committee, California's four largest wireless companies — AT&T, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon — say they generally make sure their major telecommunication hubs have at least between 48 hours and 72 hours of on-site backup power. They use mobile generators at other sites, but said the generators don't work at every cell tower. Also, the companies said the electric company warns them about blackouts just two hours ahead of time, making it hard for them to get their mobile generators in place and to keep them fueled.

AT&T spokesman Steven Maviglio said the company is experienced in managing large-scale outages, but noted "the power companies' decision to shut off power to millions of Californians in October was the largest event our state had ever seen." "Today, we are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in our network resiliency to address these new challenges and will continue to work to ensure our customers have the connectivity they need," Maviglio said.

Last year, the state Legislature passed a law requiring telecommunications companies to report large outages to the Office of Emergency Services within one hour of discovering them. State officials are still developing regulations for that law. — **Associated Press**

Pennsylvania Cong. Fred Keller (R-12th) announced on Tuesday that he will seek re-election to Congress. "It has been an honor and a privilege to represent the people of Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District," Keller said. "Since being elected to Congress, our team has worked to support policies that benefit small businesses and their workers, help our dairy farmers and agricultural industry, expand broadband access

to our rural communities, allow our veterans to receive the care and benefits they earned, and advance Pennsylvania's natural gas industry."

Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District is the largest geographical district in the Commonwealth, spanning 15 counties across central and northeast Pennsylvania. Keller, formerly a state House Representative (R-85, of Kreamer), defeated college professor Marc Friedenberg (D) in a May 21, 2019, special election to fill the vacant seat representing Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District in the U.S. House.

Keller received 68 percent of the vote while Friedenberg received 32 percent. Friedenberg on Tuesday night said, "I am not running again." Union County Democratic Committee Chairman Rick Thomas said that "at this point, we don't have anyone who has announced. We're looking. Some people have expressed an interest, but it's still early." While in Congress, Keller has supported President Donald Trump's agenda, "taking the needs of constituents directly to Congress, and never forgetting the values of those who elected him," he said in a prepared statement.

In Washington, Keller has been assigned to two key committees: The House Oversight and Reform Committee and the House Education and Labor Committee. Republican leadership also assigned Keller to the House Energy Action Team (HEAT) where he has been able to learn more about American energy policy and advocate for the benefits of the role Pennsylvania's 12th Congressional District plays in the nation's energy portfolio. – *Sunbury Daily Item*

It's hard to escape one's mortality when the family business is death. [State Rep. Harry Readshaw III](#) – a third-generation funeral director and owner of Readshaw Funeral Home in Carrick — announced Tuesday that he would retire at the end of the 2019-20 legislative session. The Democrat has represented the 36th District in the state House since 1995. "Some day, I guess no matter who you are, you have to come to grips with the aging process. When I sat down and thought about winning this next election, I'd be 81 in two more years," said Readshaw, who lives in Carrick. "It surprises you. I never dwelled on how old I was."

Readshaw said his age was the sole factor that made him decide against seeking a 14th term in the state House of Representatives. "There's just a time to go," Readshaw said. Jessica Benham, a progressive Democrat from Pittsburgh's South Side, who has endorsements from several Pittsburgh-area Democratic officials, was challenging Readshaw for his seat. A contested primary didn't factor into his decision, Readshaw said. "I've never backed away from opposition," he said.

Readshaw said he is proud to have served the South Side, Carrick, Baldwin, Brentwood and Mt. Oliver for 25 years. "There are so many things I really can't enumerate them right now," Readshaw said. "Over the years I was able to bring home large amounts of state funding for a variety of projects." The money helped build gyms and swimming pools, the Hot Metal Bridge on the South Side, and other projects that helped make the district a better place, Readshaw said. "That's the reward in doing this," he said. Readshaw, a U.S. Marine Corps

veteran, was a founder of the **Pennsylvania Gettysburg Monument Project** that helps to preserve the Civil War sites at the battlefield, he said. "I'll miss participating in government. I won't miss politics," he said, admitting it sounds like a comment many others have made. "Obviously, I'm a moderate Democrat, and I've always been that. I'm a member of the old Democratic Party, if you will. [We] create jobs, create economic development," he said.

The political divisions in Harrisburg are the same as the divisions in Washington, he said. "We've lost our function. We've lost our focus. We get too tied up now. The newer people seem to be more extremist, either left or right," Readshaw said. "The word compromise is missing from their vocabulary," he said about newer members. "Hopefully it will be a passing phenomenon, but that's the way it is at the moment," he said.

As far as his personal future, he said he's been too busy answering questions about his announcement to decide what he and his wife Carol will do without regular trips to Harrisburg. He couldn't guess how many times he's made the nearly three-and-a-half hour drive between Carrick and the state capital but said it was a good time to think and consider things, "legislatively or otherwise," Readshaw said. Until the session adjourns at the end of the year, Readshaw said he'll continue to be active in the legislature. "I've got 11 months to go, and I will fulfill all of my obligations," he said. "I still enjoy it. I still enjoy representing the people of the 36th District. The reality is I have to consider my age." – **Pittsburgh Tribune-Review**

A seven-term state lawmaker from central Pennsylvania said Monday that he will seek the Democratic nomination to run for the open state auditor general's office this year. **Scott Conklin** enters a crowded field ahead of Pennsylvania's Feb. 18 deadline to submit nomination petitions to the state elections bureau to get on the April primary ballot.

Conklin, of Centre County, was also the party's nominee for lieutenant governor in 2010 on that year's failed Democratic gubernatorial ticket. Other Democrats who have said they are running include Pittsburgh's third-term city controller Michael Lamb, Christina Hartman, a former congressional candidate from Lancaster County, Nina Ahmad, a former Philadelphia deputy mayor, and Tracie Fountain, a three-decade veteran employee of the auditor general's office.

Pennsylvania's current auditor general, Democrat Eugene DePasquale, is completing a second four-year term and is constitutionally barred from seeking another. On the Republican side, Lancaster County Commissioner Dennis Stuckey has said he will seek his party's nomination. The last Republican to hold the office was Barbara Hafer, whose term ended in 1997. – **Associated Press**



