

LAWSUIT CLAIMS SPRINT'S WiMAX SHUTDOWN TO LEAVE 300,000 WITHOUT BROADBAND, [CED MAGAZINE](#)

By Ben Munson
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Sprint long ago set the Nov. 6 shutdown date for its ill-fated WiMAX network and now the end is almost here. But some groups are alleging that once WiMAX goes away, many people will be left with Internet access.

According to a new lawsuit filed by Mobile Citizen and Mobile Beacon, the low-cost unlimited broadband service those companies provide to unlimited broadband service to 429 schools, 61 libraries and 1,820 nonprofit organizations across the country will go dark along with the WiMAX network.

Those companies are accusing Sprint of not doing enough to help them transition to a new network in order to maintain service.

"All Americans should have access to the Internet. That includes low-income Americans," John Schwartz, the founder and president of Mobile Citizen, said in a statement. "Sprint has publicly professed a commitment to closing the digital divide. It must stop this injustice and stand up for the hundreds of thousands of children, families, teachers and community members who will be shut out of the American dream if they don't have access to the Internet."

The complaint says that Sprint has "made it impossible" to migrate service over to its LTE network and accuses Sprint of throttling Internet service.

Sprint spokeswoman Stephanie Vinge Walsh said Sprint has worked diligently to transition all partners and customers ahead of the WiMAX shutdown.

"This is about a contract dispute. Simply put, the reality of this situation is that Sprint is trying to keep this service on, not turn it off. The fact is, Sprint has gone to great effort to work with all WiMAX users to transition WiMAX accounts to LTE, for the express purpose of improving the consumer broadband experience, not shutting it off. And we have been very successful at transitioning the majority of these accounts. But the transition cannot take place without the cooperation of each licensee," Vinge Walsh said.

"Like the vast majority of our other EBS licensee partners, Mobile Beacon and Mobile Citizen could have transitioned their end users to the new LTE network months ago. We have gone to great effort to work with the Mobile Beacon and Mobile Citizen to transition WiMAX accounts to LTE, but the transition cannot take place without the cooperation of the Licensees, and the recent conduct is not cooperative nor in the spirit of good faith. We have repeatedly made attempts to discuss with them how we can best meet their end users' needs and resolve this matter. But instead of working it out like reasonable partners, they chose to file a complaint."

WiMAX operates on Educational Broadband Service (EBS) spectrum, a large chunk of which Sprint gained access to when it bought Clearwire.