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## Cellular phones change, digits don't

**ALISHA GORE** 

STAFE WRITER

Federal regulators now allow cellular phone customers to retain their cellular phone numbers when they change wireless phone companies.

It is also expected that federal regulators will extend this privilege to customers who opt to use wireless-only service in their homes.

This change was brought about due to numerous requests by cellular phone customers who were doubtful of changing wireless companies. These customers did not want to lose phone numbers that family members, friends and co-workers

However, people moving from one city to another are not allowed to keep the same number.

The new rules will first apply to customers in the 100 most populous metropolitan areas in the United States. This area contains over half of this country's cell phone users.

By May 24 these regulations will apply to every cellular phone user in the United States. In as little as two and a half hours



Sophomore Danni Baird (right) talks on her cell phone while Lindsay Newsom waits.

after the new wireless service has contacted the old service, cell phone customers can have new wireless service.

However, cellular phone customers who wish to change wireless companies will most likely have to spend extra money to complete the transition.

Also, many customers will have to invest in new cellular phones because different wireless companies use different

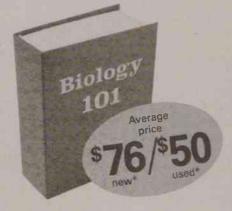
This service could take longer if a customer wishes to change more than one line or if a customer wishes to change a land line number to a cellular phone number

"This is potentially very significant to the wireless industry," Howard Waterman. a Verizon spokesperson said. "Wireless carriers will have to compete even more fiercely in a very competitive environment," Waterman said.

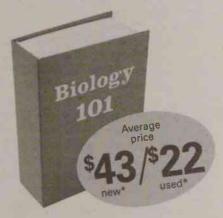
Many consumer groups support the decision of the federal regulators. "When we reduce the switching costs of going from one carrier to another, you're making the market more competitive," said Chris Murray, legislative counsel for Consumers

"There's the economic cost of a new phone number-having to print new business cards, having to potentially contact everyone who might have your phone number-and massive inconvenience,"

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