

White House says phone 'unlocking' should be legal

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Mobile phones sit on display in the window of a store on January 14, 2013 in New York City. The White House said Monday it agrees with a citizen petition arguing that "unlocking" of mobile phones to allow users to switch carriers should be legal.

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In a statement released on the White House petitions web page, presidential aide R. David Edelman said the administration supports the view of more than 114,000 signers who argued they should be able to unlock their cell phones without criminal or other penalties.

"It's common sense, crucial for protecting [consumer choice](#), and important for ensuring we continue to have the vibrant, competitive wireless market that delivers [innovative products](#) and solid service to meet consumers' needs," Edelman said.

"This is particularly important for secondhand or other [mobile devices](#) that you might buy or receive as a gift, and want to activate on the wireless network that meets your needs—even if it isn't the one on which the device was first activated. All consumers deserve that flexibility."

Edelman said the White House supports "a range of approaches to addressing this issue, including narrow legislative fixes" to the law in question, and added that the [Federal Communications Commission](#) may also play a role.

The issue arose from a ruling by the Librarian of Congress, stating that persons who circumvent the software protecting a mobile phone which is "locked" to a single carrier would no longer be exempt from [copyright law](#) as of January 26.

The ruling prompted a flurry of protests, and more than 100,000 people added their names to the White House petition, enough to require a response under the Obama administration guidelines on online petitions.

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