To amend the Communications Act of 1934 to provide for a moratorium on number reassignment after a disaster declaration, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 14, 2019

Mr. Thompson of California (for himself, Mr. Carson of Indiana, Mr. Dunn, Ms. Eshoo, Mr. Garamendi, Ms. Garcia of Texas, Ms. Kuster of New Hampshire, Ms. Norton, Mr. Rooney of Florida, and Mr. Weber of Texas) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Energy and Commerce

A BILL

To amend the Communications Act of 1934 to provide for a moratorium on number reassignment after a disaster declaration, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Preserving Home and Office Numbers in Emergencies Act of 2019”.
SEC. 2. MORATORIUM ON NUMBER REASSIGNMENT AFTER DISASTER DECLARATION.

(a) In General.—Section 251(e) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 251(e)) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(4) MORATORIUM ON NUMBER REASSIGNMENT AFTER DISASTER DECLARATION.—

“(A) In General.—During a covered period with respect to an area, a number assigned in such area may not be reassigned, and the assignment of such number may not be rescinded or otherwise modified, except at the request of the subscriber to which such number is assigned.

“(B) Extension at Request of Subscriber.—At the request of the subscriber, the prohibition in subparagraph (A) shall be extended with respect to the number assigned to such subscriber for 2 years beyond the end of the covered period.

“(C) Subscriber Right to Cancel and Resubscribe.—

“(i) In General.—In the case of a number that is assigned to a subscriber for the provision of wireline voice service at a residence that is located in an area that is
in a covered period (or in the case of such
a number with respect to which the sub-
scriber requests an extension under sub-
paragraph (B)), if the major disaster in-
volved results in covered damage to such
residence—

“(I) the provider of such service
may not charge the subscriber any
early termination or other fee in con-
nection with the cancellation of such
service; and

“(II) if the subscriber cancels
such service, such provider (or any
other provider of wireline voice service
that serves the location involved)—

“(aa) shall permit the sub-
scriber to subscribe or resub-
scribe, as the case may be, to
wireline voice service with such
number at such residence or at a
different residence (if such num-
ber is available in the location of
such different residence); and

“(bb) may not charge the
subscriber any connection fee or
other fee relating to the initiation of such service.

“(ii) TIMING.—Clause (i) shall cease to apply with respect to the number at the end of the covered period or at the end of the extended period under subparagraph (B), as the case may be.

“(iii) LIMITATION.—Except as provided in this subparagraph, the prohibition in subparagraph (A) and any extension of such prohibition under subparagraph (B) shall cease to apply with respect to a number when the subscriber cancels the service with respect to which the number is assigned.

“(D) IDENTIFICATION ON COMMISSION WEBSITE.—The Commission shall publicly identify on the website of the Commission each area that is in a covered period.

“(E) DEFINITIONS.—In this paragraph:

“(i) COVERED DAMAGE.—The term ‘covered damage’ means, with respect to a residence, damage—

“(I) that renders a residence inaccessible or uninhabitable, or that re-
results in displacement from the residence; and

“(II) with respect to which the President determines that an individual or household is eligible for housing assistance or other needs assistance under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.).

“(ii) COVERED PERIOD.—The term ‘covered period’ means, with respect to an area, any period that—

“(I) begins on the date of a declaration by the President of a major disaster under section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170) with respect to such area; and

“(II) ends on the date that is 1 year after the date on which such declaration expires.

“(iii) WIRELINE VOICE SERVICE.— The term ‘wireline voice service’ has the meaning given the term ‘voice service’ in section 227(e)(8), except that the term
‘wireline voice service’ does not include commercial mobile service (as defined in section 332(d)).”.

(b) EFFECTIVE DATE.—Paragraph (4) of section 251(e) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 251(e)), as added by subsection (a), shall apply with respect to a major disaster declared by the President under section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5170) after the date that is 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(c) TRANSITIONAL RULE.—Clause (iii) of subparagraph (E) of paragraph (4) of section 251(e) of the Communications Act of 1934 (47 U.S.C. 251(e)), as added by subsection (a), shall apply before the effective date of the amendment made to section 227(e)(8) of such Act (47 U.S.C. 227(e)(8)) by subparagraph (C) of section 503(a)(2) of division P of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (Public Law 115–141) as if such amendment were already in effect.