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New Unlocking Rule Good For You, IP Lawyer Says



The new copyright ruling that lets Americans unlock their phones without legal liability should be a significant benefit for cell addicts around the country, according to [Tim Meece](#), a lawyer for the Intellectual Property speciality firm Banner & Witcoff.

Basically, the exemption will make it possible for consumers to take cellphones with them when switching carriers. In the past, providers forced customers to turn in or throw out old phonees when switching to a new carrier.

While there has long been a grey market in unlocked phones or unlocking services, those should largely disappear as carriers will unlock each others' phones, Meece said. Charges for registering unlocked devices may also disappear.

If carriers start to do this as an enticement to come to them, there is not going to be that much demand for third-party services. Providers will unlock handsets for free or a *de minimis* fee. It will remove impediments to switching carriers and create more competition. By making it easier to unlock and thus take a phone from one carrier to another, then carriers are going to be more cost-competetive. To get the customer they are going to be less likely to charge upfront fees.

Photo: [gotigersif](#)

http://blog.wired.com/27bstroke6/2006/11/new_unlocking_r.html