

## **Congressional Talking Points & Action List**

(Updated 5/3/16)

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### **Showcase Your Value to Your Community**

When our Senators, Representatives and their staff accept an invitation to tour your facilities and projects, it is a great opportunity to step into the spotlight and talk about how intertwined your company is in the fabric of your community. Outline the value of connecting Iowans to the health care, educational, commerce, governmental and public safety benefits of the broadband economy. Discuss how rural, community-based providers have never wavered in this commitment, and explain the role your company plays in sustaining your community. Give examples of businesses that use your service, and give examples of people who “telecommute” to jobs in larger cities. Talk about your charitable giving and philanthropic engagement and your connection to your community

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### **Frame Your Facts**

Discuss the challenges associated with rural broadband deployment and provide the information below to try and help the elected official visualize the issues.

#### **Company & Service Area Details -**

- Square or route miles covered and number of communities that in your service area
- Types of service provided—voice, data, video; fixed vs. mobile
- Number of residences & businesses served for each service
- Other lines of business your company may engage in (wireless, retail electronics, etc.)
- Number of jobs your company directly or indirectly supports

#### **Broadband Availability and Financing -**

- Spend time on your broadband service delivery and talk about the levels of speed that your customers have access to
- Try to give “plain English” examples of what your broadband service allows subscribers to accomplish: “At 25 mbps a family of 5 can each watch a different show on Netflix at the same time.”
- Talk about the true “A to Z” costs of providing broadband service from design and engineering to purchase of the fiber and installation of drop cables
- Talk about how you secured the capital required to conduct your latest project whether that was by using your reserves or by USDA loan programs and grants

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**Outline Your Ask – Discuss the Issues Impacting Your Company**

**Call Completion –** *(also see attached NTCA one pager)*

- Encourage your members of Congress to co-sponsor the "Improving Rural Call Quality and Reliability Act," S. 827 introduced by Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), or H.R. 2566 introduced by Rep. David Young (R-IA-03).

**Set Top Boxes -** *(also see attached NTCA one pager)*

- Inform your members of Congress of your opposition to the technical mandate as prohibitively expensive, unrealistic and unnecessary.

**Video -**

- Inform your members of Congress of the ongoing difficulties small providers continue to experience in providing affordable video services.

**ISP Transparency Exemption -**

- Thank members of the Iowa House delegation for voting to support H.R. 4596 that exempts carriers with less than 250,000 subscribers from recent FCC rules on divulging cost and performance information to customers.

**ACAM Modeling -**

- Describe the impacts of the FCC's Alternative Connect America Model for rate-of-return carriers on your company.
- Note that the wide ranging impacts will benefit some while negatively hurting others by way of federal support.

**FirstNet -**

- Inform your members of Congress of the need for close coordination between FirstNet and rural providers to leverage existing network assets in hard-to-serve areas.

**Standalone Broadband -**

- Urge your members of Congress to encourage the FCC to follow through on its commitment to complete work on simple and straightforward USF updates.

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**MOST IMPORTANTLY – Thank Them for Their Time**

- Be respectful of their chaotic schedule and the likelihood that they are late to leave your facility to go to another constituent commitment, thank them for spending some of that time with you.



**HELP END THE RURAL CALL COMPLETION PROBLEM:  
COSPONSOR THE BIPARTISAN IMPROVING RURAL CALL QUALITY  
AND RELIABILITY ACT**

Many people living in rural America are experiencing telephone calls not getting through, or they are receiving poor quality calls. The inability of people to receive phone calls greatly weakens the reliability of the telephone network and threatens your constituents' safety, commerce, and well-being.

The call completion problem appears to often be the result of least cost routers - entities employed by a customer's long-distance carrier – who attempt to minimize their costs of delivering calls by failing to deliver calls to rural areas where the cost to provide phone service is higher. The consumers involved in the call never know the least cost router exists in the middle, and often times, neither the carriers involved nor the FCC can identify who all the least cost routers handling any given call may be.

Examples of call routing and termination problems include: the call never reaches the end office switch of the carrier serving the called party, a call goes through to the point of ringing but does not connect when the receiver is picked up, or the call is actually delivered, but the quality of the call is very poor.

To address these problems, please cosponsor the “Improving Rural Call Quality and Reliability Act.” S. 827 introduced by Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), or H.R. 2566 introduced by Rep. David Young (R-IA-03). This bipartisan effort would require least cost routers to abide by reasonable minimum quality standards, register with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) so that they can at least be identified for investigation purposes, and ensure that originating long-distance carriers use only registered least cost routers.

Over the course of this problem's multi-year history, numerous complaints have been filed with the FCC, including many by the rural telecom providers that are sometimes wrongly blamed for the problem calls. In response, the FCC has penalized several long-distance providers and has issued an Order mandating data collection in an attempt to track this problem. However, call completion failures persist and even more must be done – transparency is needed in the marketplace, and consumers should be able to expect at least a minimum level of call quality and reliability.

After several years of waiting for the problem to end, it is time to bring least cost route providers out of the shadows by supporting S. 827 and H.R. 2566. Congress should take swift action against all providers who perpetuate a problem that continues to threaten our quality of life, economic development, and public safety.

**To cosponsor please contact the following Senate or House staff:**

Senate - S. 827 – Tommy Walker at [Tommy.Walker@klobuchar.senate.gov](mailto:Tommy.Walker@klobuchar.senate.gov)

House - H.R. 2566 – Adam Pradko at [adam.pradko@mail.house.gov](mailto:adam.pradko@mail.house.gov)

**S. 827 Cosponsors:**

Tester (D-MT)  
Franken (D-MN)  
Merkley (D-OR)  
King (I-ME)  
Heinrich (D-NM)

**H.R. 2566 Cosponsors:**

Loebsack (D-IA)  
Nolan (D-MN)  
Peterson (D-MN)  
Pocan (D-WI)  
Welch (D-VT)  
Zinke (R-MT)  
Luetkemeyer (R-MO)  
Duffy (R-WI)  
Graves (R-MO)  
Kind (D-WI)  
LaMalfa (R-CA)  
Kirkpatrick (D-AZ)

## NO NEED FOR FCC'S SET-TOP BOX PROPOSAL

### **The Issue:**

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is actively considering a technical mandate aimed at fostering a competitive video set-top box marketplace. The FCC says the goal is to “unlock the set-top box”, and asserts that the mandate is required by a 1996 law directing that consumers have access to program guide information on competitive devices, in addition to actual content delivery.

The proposal would have Multichannel Video Programming Distributors (MVPDs) pass three information streams to competitive devices or applications: 1) what programming is available to consumers, 2) what devices may do with the programming (i.e. – recording), and 3) the video programming itself. The proposal does not envision a single mandated security system to protect content, but rather requires MVPDs to offer at least one content protection system that is openly licensed on reasonable and non-discriminatory terms. To accomplish this, the FCC proposes that an independent body would develop open standards for the streams noted above.

### **NTCA's Perspective:**

NTCA is opposed to this technical mandate for several reasons:

- 1) It is unnecessary. Technology is evolving quickly, and consumers have already “unlocked the set-top box” through myriad consumer devices that enable viewing of all sorts of content. The FCC proposals would actually hamper innovation. Developing new standards will likely take years, slowing or stifling innovations yet to be realized.
- 2) The technology to implement this mandate does not actually exist, and it is unclear how a new standards body would achieve success when a similar body failed to do so in making recommendations to the FCC in the first place.
- 3) It will be prohibitively expensive for every MVPD to retrofit their systems to comply with a new standard, and those costs will necessarily be passed on to consumers who, once again, are already gaining increased access to content through other means.
- 4) It is unclear if it will be possible to protect copyrighted content from unauthorized rebroadcasting, recording, or other use after the content is passed to the competitive device.

### **The Solution:**

Consumers are already leveraging all manner of devices and applications beyond their set-top box to view content of their choosing, so the Commission's proposed technical mandate is a solution in need of a problem. This proposed technical mandate would sacrifice the interests of those consumers, and foist new costs on MVPDs, just to advance the business plan of a narrow group of parties who wish to deploy and/or leverage competitive set-top boxes. The ramifications of this proposal on technological evolution and existing video systems have not been thought through. The Commission should back away from this proposal and continue to allow the competitive marketplace to evolve to meet consumers' needs.