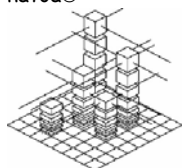


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Local Government Rejects Ensign/McCain Legislation

August 2, 2005, Alexandria, VA – Calling the proposed legislation “a huge disappointment,” the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA) reacted strongly to the pre-recess introduction of Senate Bill S. 1504, the Broadband Investment and Consumer Choice Act of 2005 by Senators Ensign (R-NV) and McCain (R-AZ). NATOA is calling upon its members to oppose the bill.

“Local governments want and welcome competition in their communities, but this legislation is certainly not an acceptable approach and will not achieve the stated goals of competition and consumer choice,” said Coralie Wilson, President of NATOA. “The legislation gives away all of the rights of a community to protect its citizens, and provides no assurances that local residents will reap any benefits as a result of its adoption. It is nothing more than a veiled attempt to eviscerate the lawful power of state and local elected leaders, to undermine the principles of federalism, and to create an unnecessary and unwarranted subsidy for an already healthy and wealthy private telecommunications sector.”

The legislation strips local authorities of their ability to meet the needs of their local communities, it deprives local communities and their taxpayers of the benefits they have long derived from permitting private industry to use public property in exchange for payment, it provides unprecedented tax benefits to the telecommunications industry without any concurrent benefit to the public, and it undermines the ability of first responders to use communications services and tools to ensure the safety and security of our communities. It purports to establish a framework that will supposedly increase competition and consumer choice, and yet strips consumers of all independent recourse and denies all potential competitors, other than the giant incumbent telephone and cable companies, the ability to compete.

In reviewing the legislation, Executive Director Libby Beaty stated, “I appreciate the time and interest that Senators Stevens and Inouye and their staff have evidenced thus far in their outreach to all stakeholders in the telecommunications rewrite debate. I am surprised that Senator Ensign has not taken the same deliberate approach, or provided for the interests of all parties to be considered. NATOA will reach out to our members to ensure that they have the information and tools appropriate and necessary to assist in educating our elected leaders at all levels, in hopes of eventually reaching a more reasoned and balanced approach to reform.”

NATOA is preparing analysis and educational materials for local governments to use in the course of communicating with their elected officials. Beaty stated, “We hope that by providing the facts and educating those serving in Congress, we may be able to shed light on the variety of detrimental effects this legislation would have on consumers, local governments and our economy.”

NATOA represents local governments and those who advise local governments on telecommunications issues and its membership includes local government agencies and staff that regulate cable services at the local level. The experience of NATOA’s membership with respect to competition in the multi-channel video marketplace and consumer issues in this market is second to none.

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