

Technology In Our Lives

Keeping Broadband Affordable For More Americans

(NAPS)—The nation’s small, independent telecommunications providers are eager to implement service improvements for their customers. These mostly rural and small town Americans may soon get more and better communications services, but the key is keeping costs affordable. That’s because these carriers, which serve areas left behind long ago by other companies because of the substantial economic challenges of serving sparsely populated areas—they cover more than 40 percent of the nation’s land- mass and less than 5 percent of telecom subscribers—are now striving to upgrade their communications networks while at the same time keeping rates affordable for their customers.

The Situation

Because of the way Federal Communications Commission (FCC) universal service rules are currently structured, some consumers in rural America are being forced to select services they may not want—like traditional land-line telephones—to get services more and more consumers do want: high-speed broadband at an affordable rate. Most people who live in urban areas have a variety of communications options to choose from, including telephone, broadband and wireless, and these rural carriers believe all Americans—no matter where they live—should have reasonably comparable choices in terms of the services they can receive.

To help, NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association is working with the FCC and lawmakers to update the rules in a targeted way so rural America can enjoy a sufficient support system for broadband communications services.

Explains Chief Executive Officer Shirley Bloomfield: “All Americans, regardless of who they are



Small town and rural Americans and their telecommunications providers want the government to update the way universal service policies are structured.

or where they live, deserve to have a reasonable opportunity to participate in our increasingly interconnected and online society. Universal service policies need to be updated to adapt to a more broadband-oriented world, but we need a solution that promotes affordable rates and sustainable networks that will stand the test of time and provide consumers with choices.”

For decades, the providers relied on consumers paying reasonable rates, universal service support and fees collected for use of their networks to justify the investments and operating expenses necessary for multiuse networks in some of the hardest-to-reach corners of the United States. Rather than cutting these critical cost recovery mechanisms or leaving them tied to outdated rules, NTCA believes policymakers should sustain and update these programs.

Washington Wants To Know

Americans can ask legislators where they stand on this or any issue at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.

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