



National Tribal Telecommunications Association

Derek E. White

President

January 14, 2008

Membership

- Eight Tribal Telephone Companies
 - Cheyenne River Sioux Telephone (SD)
 - Ft. Mojave Telecommunication, Inc. (AZ)
 - Gila River Telecommunications, Inc. (AZ)
 - Hopi Telecommunications, Inc. (AZ)
 - Mescalero Apache Telecommunications (NM)
 - Saddleback Communications (AZ)
 - San Carlos Apache Telecommunications (AZ)
 - Tohono O'odham Utility Authority (AZ)

Mission Statement

“The mission of the National Tribal Telecommunications Association is to be the national advocate for telecommunications service on behalf of its member telephone companies and to provide guidance and assistance to members who are working to provide modern telecommunications services to tribal lands.”

Why Tribal Telecom

- Among the eight tribal telcos, 6 had less than 10% voice-dial tone penetration in the 1990 census;
- Today - service penetration increase to their communities by at least 650%, some by over 980%.
- Ability to connect our own communities, previously un-served
 - Represents self- sufficiency and
 - Full exercise of our sovereignty

Principles for Legislative & Regulatory Reform

Barriers & Issues for Tribal Communities

- Tribal communities are the worst-served communities in America;
- disputed data: 50-70% penetration in America's 563 federally recognized tribes, compared to America's 98% penetration;
- Broadband is largely absent;
- Call for a "Voice-dialtone Safetynet" for rural communities

Governing Policy Authority

- Communications Act of 1934: Public Interest and Universal Access provisions requires service to all communities at a fair rate, comparable to urban communities;
- Section 254 of the Communications Act addresses universal service and access to rural communities
- Section 706 addresses the need to provide advanced technologies to rural communities
- The FCC's Tribal Trust Policy requires the FCC to assist and consult with Tribal communities

Voice-dialtone Safety net

- In the rush to embrace new technologies and broadband capacity, communities and residents without voice dial-tone connectivity—predominantly tribal communities—may not get broadband service (a violation of universal service mandates of the Communications Act);
- NTTA advocates Federal broadband funding prioritize communities without dial-tone connectivity.

Universal Service Challenge

- the RUS funds supply side development, but have not solved lack of connectivity for tribal and remote subscribers (demand side needs);
- Remote and poor communities—predominantly Tribal--are not receiving the full measure of Lifeline and Linkup support

Efficiency of Universal Service Fund

- New technologies and new capacity requirements are increasing demand on Universal Service Funds;
- lack of efficiency in the current Universal Service Fund rules reduce the likelihood that last mile rural communities will be connected;
- Universal service rules need to equalize requirements between landline and wireless ETC providers: in reliability of lifeline service; in applying actual costs for recoveries; in connecting subscribers, in order to receive support funds.

NTTA's Proposed Solutions: The Farm Bill

- New Section 6111: targeting “Substantially Unserved Trust Areas” (SUTAs) for RUS strategic funding;
- Tribal governments eligible for 2% loans;
- New discretionary loan options: term extensions, waivers, new collateral policies to incentivize targeting of “underserved” tribal communities;
- change “may” to “shall” for RUS intervention;
- Support adoption of “voice dialtone safety-net for Substantially Underserved Tribal Areas.
- Require assessment of connectivity impact

Communications Act Changes: Commerce Committee

- Demand the FCC meet its universal access public interest and trust policy obligations to tribal communities.
- Support tribal choice of regulatory forum between the FCC and state;
- Adopt definition of “unserved areas” (20% of community without voice dialtone)
- Reform Universal Service rules to equalize standards between technology services

Communications Act Changes

- Leverage universal service funding to connect “unserved” rural areas;
- Permit Tribes to re-direct high cost funds to new carriers that increase connectivity in previously “unserved” areas;
- Change FCC rules to help tribes to bid on licenses in tribal wireless service areas;
- Support open spectrum—unlicensed areas--in tribal communities;
- Terminate and audit wireless licensing Tribal Bidding Credits.

NTTA Seeks Collaboration

- With OPASTCO, NTCA, WTA to direct federal resources to connect “unserved” or “underserved” tribal communities;
- To create a “voice dialtone safety-net for rural communities;
- To preserve the Universal Service Fund to leverage rural connectivity;
- Provide mutual support