

2007 NATOA Policy Platform

“Promoting Community Interests in Communications”

NATOA Supports:

- **... the effective and efficient use of all communications technologies including voice, video, data, and information services over wired and wireless transmission technologies.**

Local governments support implementation of Federal, State and Local laws and rules that encourage open and interconnected services and technologies that are universally available to all citizens.

Local governments have a vital role in determining the effective and efficient use of these communications services because much of this enabling infrastructure resides within their jurisdictions and is subject to unique local conditions.

- **... the development of effective local information infrastructures and institutional networks. Each community best understands its information, communications, economic development and security needs.**

Local governments must have the ability to require that voice, video, and data communication networks provide sufficient bandwidth and resources to meet local community needs, to ensure the public's safety and convenience, and provide important and critical communication services.

Local governments must be empowered to develop, coordinate, operate and provide communications facilities and services. These must incorporate sufficient technological and financial support to provide the tools and the delivery mechanisms for a variety of applications, including wired and wireless telephony, video, data and Internet services.

- **... local authority to develop public, educational and governmental access channels, community programming, and related services.**

Local governments should foster open communication systems that support information and creativity shared throughout organizations, institutions and the community as they are employing new and innovative multi-media communication tools. Local governments must have adequate resources available to enable the provision of information in a cost-effective, efficient and timely manner while staying abreast of new technologies.

- **... the fair and efficient allocation of radio spectrum that provides quality frequencies, free from interference, for all local public safety communication needs.**

Local governments and policy makers at all levels of government should consider the scarcity of radio spectrum both with regard to public safety and the financial burden its reallocation or modifications would have on local governments. Public safety needs should have priority in allocation of radio spectrum over private and commercial use.

- **... the orderly transition to a truly competitive communications marketplace.**

Local governments recognize that genuine competition can yield more programming and applications, improved and enhanced customer service, affordable rates for all and technology deployment that meets the needs of their communities now and in the foreseeable future. They also know that genuine competition may not develop in all communities or in all markets. Therefore, federal, state and local governments must work together to ensure that consumers are protected from possible market power abuses and to develop, through private and/or public resources, local information infrastructure and services that enable all segments of the community to participate in a global economy.

- **... local consumer service protections and consumer education efforts.**

Local governments should protect consumer interests by establishing and enforcing customer service standards and by promoting consumer education programs. All communications service providers, including cable and broadband, must give consumers complete and accurate information, including but not limited to, information about rates, services, privacy, billing methods, customer credits, and complaint resolution. All providers must work in good faith with local governments to establish consumer education programs to inform customers about their rights and responsibilities. Providers should fully explain and give customers complete consumer protection information before the customer commits to a service contract, and service providers should use web sites, cable systems, mailings, and other useful means to continuously provide consumer education to customers throughout the provision of service.

- **... local government management of public rights-of-way and the right of local jurisdictions to govern land use and regulate zoning for all communications service providers and facilities without unnecessary state or federal intervention.**

Federal law, court decisions, and historical precedent all support local management of these scarce public resources. The public entrusts local governments to ensure that use of public rights-of-way by communications providers does not interfere with public safety, unnecessarily disrupt commerce, impede general transportation uses, or otherwise impose costs on the local government or its taxpayers.

Public rights-of-way represent property of tremendous economic value, paid for by local taxpayers. The public has a right to expect that its property, held and managed by the government as a public trust, is used efficiently and safely.

As trustees of our taxpayers, local governments should ensure that all private profit-making communications providers using public rights-of-way and other public property provide just and reasonable compensation for such use.

- **... diversity in media and telecommunications ownership and content.**

A democracy depends upon an educated and informed population. An educated and informed population depends upon the availability of a wide variety of opinions and viewpoints. The ability to control what is transmitted and what is received is inherent in ownership. Therefore, the concentration of media ownership in a few large companies poses grave danger to the freedom of expression guaranteed by the First Amendment.