

## **TSTCI VICE PRESIDENT WELDON R. GRAY TESTIFIES BEFORE THE TEXAS HOUSE COMMITTEE ON REGULATED INDUSTRIES**

On May 11 the House Committee on Regulated Industries heard invited testimony during a public hearing on several telecommunications issues including the Texas universal service fund (TUSF), access line fees and municipal utility relocation.

As a result of SB 5 passed in the second special legislative session, the legislature and the PUC are currently in the process of reviewing TUSF. The PUC is to provide a report of its findings to the legislature in January 2007.

PUC Commissioner Barry Smitherman provided some TUSF history and noted that it has not been fully evaluated since its implementation in 1999. He noted that certain changes in state telecommunications laws have led to the growth of Lifeline service. He added that, in addition to several issues associated with the state USF, the PUC is looking at the increasing deployment of technologies, including Internet protocol and voice-over-Internet-protocol services, which don't currently pay into the universal service fund.

Testifying on behalf of the Texas Cable and Telecommunications Association (TCTA), Mr. Joe Gillan referred to TUSF as a "subsidy" and indicated that reform is necessary because the basis of the fund is outdated due to changes in telecommunications technology and service offerings over the years. He stated that TUSF currently relies on data that is shielded from public scrutiny. Mr. Gillan stated, "In particular, only the incumbent telephone companies and the commission itself have access to the number and location of lines that are subsidized today."

TSTCI's Vice President, Weldon R. Gray (Eastex Telephone Cooperative), responded, "I'm not sure what else we can do in the form of accountability...we follow the accounting system prescribed by the FCC. The accounting we do is very detailed in showing how the funds are spent."

Speaking on behalf of TSTCI Member Companies, Weldon said that the state universal service fund is "not broken," though there may be some areas that could be fixed.

Weldon asked the state legislators and the PUC to consider the fact that there are changes occurring at the federal level involving federal USF, which could have an effect on TUSF.

A video file of the Regulated Industries Committee hearing is available on the Texas House of Representatives' website at: <http://www.house.state.tx.us/fx/av/committee79/60511p35.ram>.

## U.S. SENATOR PRAISES ADVANCEMENTS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND

During a Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee hearing on May 18, Chairman Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) praised the progress that has been made since the inception of the Universal Service Fund (USF). Today's hearing was the first of three that will be convened by the Committee to review the Communications, Consumers' Choice, and Broadband Deployment Act of 2006 (S. 2686), legislation that Stevens unveiled earlier this month.

During the hearing, Stevens stressed that the communications services made possible by USF have made Alaska a safer place to live. He told his colleagues about a man who was snowmachining near Mt. McKinley when he suddenly dropped into a crevasse, wedging his machine. The man was rescued because he was able to connect to 9-1-1 on his cell phone, emitting a signal that a satellite was able to detect. "The world has changed," said Stevens, "and there is a safety factor now in communication that is assured by the Universal Service Fund."

At the end of the hearing, Stevens added, "There must be some mechanism to satisfy the demand of the public; access to modern communications is now an American right. We intend to see that this bill preserves that right."

S. 2686 reforms existing communications laws. According to Stevens, its provisions promote competition, cost savings for consumers, and the speedy deployment of broadband services to all Americans. An integral component of this legislation is the Universal Service Fund, a federal program designed to offset the cost of building and operating telecommunications networks in rural areas of the United States. The bill also stipulates that carriers receiving USF support must provide broadband access within five years of the bill's enactment.

The second hearing on the Communications, Consumers' Choice, and Broadband Deployment Act of 2006 is scheduled for Thursday, May 25, 2006.

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## TSTCI MEETING UPDATE



The **TSTCI Spring Managers' Conference**, June 7-9 on South Padre Island, is headed for record attendance. The sessions, sun and socializing are all factors. It's a great time to network with colleagues at the golf tournament, during the session day and at the reception. If you haven't registered yet, check the TSTCI website for the meeting information or contact Martha Shepperd at [martha.shepperd@chrsolutions.com](mailto:martha.shepperd@chrsolutions.com) or 972-484-2323.

A month later, the **TSTCI Bookkeepers/Accountants/Commercial Conference** will be held July 12-14 in San Antonio. Once again, there will be some great speakers, informative sessions and networking opportunities. Check the website or contact Martha for information on that conference, too.

Last but not least, be sure to mark your calendars for this year's **TSTCI Futures Retreat**. It will be at the Harvey's Resort in Lake Tahoe, August 2-3. The program and other information will be sent by email to all TSTCI members at the end of June.

### ***Questions on any of the meetings?***

Contact Ann Weinberg, TSTCI Director of Conferences, at 703-237-1644 or by e-mail - [ann.weinberg@chrsolutions.com](mailto:ann.weinberg@chrsolutions.com).



## CHR SOLUTIONS FURTHER STRENGTHENS EXPERTISE

CHR Solutions, a professional firm providing engineering and consulting services in the telecommunications field, is pleased to announce that Lee Skinnell joined the firm on May 1, 2006 as Senior Consultant of Video Services. Lee will round out CHR's video capabilities as he assists with the development of detailed designs and specifications for the deployment of IP and RF video services; integration of voice, video and data as these technologies converge in the headend; transport systems and distribution systems. He will be based in CHR's Lubbock, Texas office.

"We already have a great group of CHR video experts with a total of more than 100 years of experience," said Rick Overman, President of CHR's Engineering Services Group. "But Lee's 28 years of operating experience with hybrid fiber coax and CMTS systems at Cox Communications will bring yet another valuable element to our skill sets as we assist our clients with the planning and implementation of their next generation networks."

Thomas Jensen joined CHR Solutions this month as Director of Business Development. Tom's years of telecom experience will add even more depth to CHR's telecom staff. Having been the CEO of a telecom network provider, as well as an enterprise user, he brings a unique perspective to the business. He has hands-on experience working with network hosted applications and VoIP. His experience in product management for ADC Telecommunications and his marketing and strategic planning work at both Teleconnect and McLeod USA will also benefit our clients in this competitive environment and help them plan for the future. He will be located in CHR's Minneapolis, Minnesota office.

"With the current trends in convergence of legacy telecom networks with extremely large broadband IP and wireless networks of tomorrow, Tom's experience is a welcome addition to the Minnesota office," said Steven Steele, CHR General Manager of the Midwest region.

In addition to video services, CHR Solutions provides integrated telecommunications engineering and consulting services including next generation network design and management, outside plant services; CLEC feasibility, interconnection agreements and implementation; regulatory/business compliance assistance; separations/tariffs; strategic planning; marketing, advertising and research; emerging technologies planning; financial modeling; code acquisition and provisioning administration.

CHR Solutions is headquartered in Dallas, Texas and operates other offices throughout the United States. The CHR web site, [www.chrsolutions.com](http://www.chrsolutions.com), provides more details about the company's services.

### ***Mapcom Systems Announces M4® Dispatch Manager***

Mapcom Systems announced today the upcoming release of M4 Dispatch Manager, a software module designed to help telecommunications companies map & manage their customer workforce in conjunction with their use of M4 Solutions Geographical Operations System software.

M4 Dispatch Manager works directly with the everyday mapping and management functions of M4 Solutions and gives trouble tickets and service orders an immediate connection to the maps. Whether created in M4 Solutions or in any other program with which M4 integrates, M4 Dispatch Manager streamlines into one system the management of trouble tickets and service orders from creation to close, creating efficiencies for customer service, dispatch, I&R and engineering.

The resulting paperless workflow saves time and money and increases customer satisfaction through faster, more accurate trouble and service order management.

Some of the functionality included in managing trouble tickets and service orders from creation to close through M4 Dispatch Manager include the ability to distribute trouble tickets and service orders, map service order locations, and track truck locations with GPS.

For more information on this and other products, visit [www.mapcom.com](http://www.mapcom.com).



## ON MEMORIAL DAY

*Let us remember those who  
gave the ultimate sacrifice  
for our country . . .*

*and for us.*

**PLEASE HAVE A SAFE MEMORIAL DAY HOLIDAY.**

### Upcoming Events

#### May 2006

**29** **Memorial Day** (*TSTCI Offices Closed*)

#### June 2006

4-6 Telcom Insurance Group Risk Management Conference – Reno, Nevada  
**7-9** **TSTCI Spring Managers' Conference – South Padre Island, Texas**  
10-12 NTCA Summer Business Conference – San Francisco, California  
11-13 NTCA Human Resources HRNet Conference – Orlando, Florida  
13 PUC Workshop – Project No. 32527 – Austin, Texas  
20 PUC Workshop – Project No. 32529 – Austin, Texas  
28 PUC Workshop – Project No. 31925 – Austin, Texas

#### July 2006

**4** **Independence Day** (*TSTCI Offices Closed*)  
10-11 NTCA Regions 7, 8 & 10 – Austin, Texas  
**12-14** **TSTCI Bookkeepers/Accountants/Commercial Conference – San Antonio, Texas**  
15-19 OPASTCO Summer Convention & Trade Show – Hot Springs, Virginia  
17-18 NTCA Regions 1, 2 & 3 – Hilton Head, South Carolina