

BROADBAND SERVICE A TOPIC OF DISCUSSION DURING LEGISLATIVE INTERIM COMMITTEE HEARING

The House Committee on Land and Resource Management met September 19 to hear invited testimony on rural issues. Representatives from 18 agencies presented testimony in support of the state's newest agency, the Office of Rural Community Affairs (ORCA). ORCA was created with the passage of House Bill 7 during the 77th legislative session (2001) to serve as a focal agency for the state's health, economic development, and community development programs targeting rural Texas communities.

During the hearing, William M. Jeter, III, ORCA's Chairman, indicated that agency needed more funding. ORCA focuses on key issues affecting rural communities, including healthcare, agribusiness, natural resources and wildlife, housing and education, public services and transportation, community and economic development, and rural community leadership issues. Chairman Jeter also indicated that the future success of rural areas depended on affordable broadband service.

In written testimony prepared for the public hearing, the PUC's Policy Development Division Director, Pam Whittington, stated that PUC Staff participated in an inter-agency working group meeting sponsored by ORCA, and plans to participate in the next quarterly inter-agency meeting in October. The PUC's Broadband Team also plans to participate in ORCA conferences involving telecommunications matters.

Ms. Whittington's testimony also states that there have been meetings between the PUC's Broadband Team and ORCA's Technology/Telecommunications Program Specialist on matters primarily dealing with high-speed Internet availability in Texas and the PUC's advanced services rule, which was adopted in April. The PUC's rule provides procedures for obtaining advanced services in areas served by certain certificated telecommunications utilities. The PUC has not yet received any requests for advanced services pursuant to this rule, but indicates that communities are showing an interest and expects that requests for service will be submitted in the near future.

In addition to adoption of the new advanced services rule, the PUC funded a research project conducted by the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas in Austin. The project investigated methods of facilitating broadband deployment, particularly in rural Texas. One result of this project was the creation of the Lone Star Broadband website (www.lonestarbroadband.org), which includes success stories of broadband deployment in rural communities, as well as a "toolkit" for use by communities wishing to obtain high-speed internet service.

Testimony regarding working with ORCA to assist rural areas was provided by several other agencies including the Department of Agriculture, the Texas Department of Economic Development, and the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund, to name a few. Information on ORCA and their upcoming meetings can be found on the agency's website: www.orca.state.tx.us.

TEXAS "NO-CALL" LIST SIGNUP SPECIAL

For a limited time, Texans may register for the Statewide and Electric No-Call Lists for half price. From September 20 through December 31, 2002, the cost of signing up for both lists will be \$2.40 instead of the normal \$4.80. Telemarketing prohibition for consumers who register during this time would begin March 1, 2003 and their numbers would remain on the lists for a period of five years.

Legislation introduced by Representative Burt Solomons created the Statewide No-Call List, which was implemented by the Public Utility Commission January 1, 2002. The Electric No-Call List was created in 1999 as part of the electric deregulation legislation. Currently, 729,401 Texans have registered on the no-call lists, with the highest registration total (120,987) in the 972 area code. Other area codes average 19,477.

Representative Solomon said the special price grew from a desire to provide more outreach for the program. "It is important to me that all Texans know this is available and affordable," he stated.

Consumers may register online at www.TexasNoCall.com, or can request a registration form by calling toll free (866) 896-6225 or by mail at Texas No Call, P.O. Box 313, E. Walpole, MA 02032.

FCC CONSIDERS UPDATING TELEMARKETING RULES

In 1992, the FCC adopted rules to implement the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) of 1991. Over the last ten years, telemarketing practices have changed significantly. New technologies have emerged, allowing telemarketers to better target potential customers through the cost-effective use of telephones and fax machines. These new telemarketing techniques have increased public concern regarding consumer privacy.

In light of this, the FCC is requesting comment on whether their rules need to be revised to more effectively enforce congressional directives in the TCPA regarding individual privacy rights and public safety interests, while balancing these issues with commercial freedom of speech. The FCC also wants to determine if current rules regarding the use of autodialers, prerecorded messages and unsolicited fax advertisements need to be revised or additional rules put into place.

The FCC is also interested in the effectiveness of company-specific do-not-call lists, and whether there is a need to revisit the option of establishing a national do-not-call list and how this might be accomplished in conjunction with the Federal Trade Commission's recent proposal of adopting such a list, as well as individual state's do-not-call lists. In the event the Federal Trade Commission takes further action on its proposed do-not-call registry or makes other revisions to its Telemarketing Sales Rule, the FCC may seek additional comment.

TIF Has MOVED

The Texas Infrastructure Fund office has moved! Their new telephone number and physical address:

Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund
311 East 14th Street
Austin, Texas 78701
Main Telephone Number: (512) 475-5300

Their mailing address and toll free telephone number remain the same:

Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund
P.O. Box 12876
Austin, Texas 78711-2876
Toll Free: (888) 533-8432

FCC CONVENES FEDERAL-STATE JOINT CONFERENCE ON REGULATORY ACCOUNTING ISSUES

At the beginning of this month, the FCC adopted an order establishing a Federal-State Joint Conference on Accounting Issues. The Joint Conference will be charged with ensuring that regulatory accounting data and related information filed by telecommunications is accurate, truthful, and thorough. In addition, the Joint Conference will provide a forum for state and federal policymakers to consider, coordinate, and conduct initiatives that will ensure the collection and exchange of regulatory accounting information is adequate and effective.

The Joint Conference will begin a reexamination of federal and state regulatory accounting and related reporting requirements and make recommendations for improvements. The membership will include representatives of up to five State commissions and be chaired by the FCC's Chairman or his designee. Any or all of the other FCC Commissioners may participate in the Joint Conference.

FCC Chairman Michael Powell is pleased that the FCC has moved quickly to address the regulatory accounting requirements that apply to telecommunications carriers. It is his hope that the Joint Conference will engage in a thorough analysis of requirements to ensure that information captured is both necessary and sufficient for the FCC's purpose.

Have You Visited Us Online Lately?

The TSTCI website is full of valuable information for Member Companies and Associate Member Companies.

What's there, you ask?

- ☎ Links to Member Company, Associate Member, and industry sites
- ☎ An industry calendar with dates of upcoming events, linked to the event sponsors
- ☎ Past issues of *TSTCI Information*
- ☎ Employment listings (*Note: if your company has an employment position open, be sure to let us know! It's free to have your employment listings posted on our website!*)
- ☎ The entire TSTCI Intrastate Access Services Tariff
- ☎ Information on how our Member Companies have provided advanced services in their areas

FOR MEMBER COMPANIES ONLY:

(username/password required)

- ☎ TSTCI Regulatory Alerts and Advisories
- ☎ TSTCI Board of Directors and Committee contact information
- ☎ Reports on Texas PUC Regulatory Dockets and Projects
- ☎ Reports on Legislation affecting the telecommunications industry from the most recent session

Be sure to visit us soon at www.tstci.org!



ENMR•Plateau Telecommunications, the eastern New Mexico regional leader in telecommunications since 1949, is seeking an **Advertising Manager** in Clovis, NM to manage all areas of advertising from creative, placement, multi-product tie-ins, and agency interactions. A Bachelor's degree and/or equivalent experience in advertising, marketing, public relations, or closely related field is preferred. Excellent verbal and written communication skills must be demonstrated, along with software and data analysis proficiency. Advertising experience within the telecommunications industry will be helpful.

Join their team and enjoy competitive base pay plus benefits, including company-paid medical, vision and dental insurance, pension plan, 401k, Paid Time Off, and tuition reimbursement. A pre-employment drug screen test, at company expense, may be required, as well as other testing to determine competence of candidate. Obtain an application by calling (505) 389-4222; or electronically at www.enmr.com.



Employees of **Colorado Valley Telephone Cooperative, Inc.** recently raised \$14,000 during their annual employee-sponsored charity golf tournament. Proceeds were donated to volunteer fire departments in Ellinger, Fayetteville, Flatonia, Hallettsville, La Grange, Ledbetter, Muldoon, Oakland, Round Top-Warrenton, Schulenburg, South Lee County, Weimar, and Winchester. You can visit their website to see who the winners were – www.coloradovally.com/golf.

Texas Telephone Association recently announced that **Mr. Jim Grover** has joined them as their new Director of Governmental Affairs.

At the TTA Annual Convention, several awards were issued. This year's Neville Haynes Award was presented to **Tom Jones** (recently retired from

Sprint). The Outstanding Associate Member Award was bestowed upon **Wes Robinson** of John Stauralakis, Inc. TTA presented the Outstanding Achievement Award to **Ron Elmore**, recently retired from Southwestern Bell. Chairman's Citation Awards were given to **Jody Barr, Jim West, Amy Linzey, Theresa Chester, Debi Nobles, Jose Camacho** and **Toney Prather**. Congratulations to all the recipients whose hard work and dedication to our industry deserved recognition!

Got NEWS???

We'd like to hear from you! Press releases, or even a quick note, can be sent by e-mail to [TSTCI@tstci.org!](mailto:TSTCI@tstci.org)



Upcoming Events

October 2002

- 2-4 **TSTCI Annual Membership Meeting – Austin, TX**
- 7-8 NTCA Business Briefing – Nashville, TN

November 2002

- 4-6 USTA Billing & Customer Care Conference – New Orleans, LA
- 7-8 NTCA Legal Seminar – Phoenix, AZ
- 28 **Happy Thanksgiving! (TSTCI Offices Closed)**

December 2002

- 8-10 Telecommunity Resource Center's Fifth National Community Network Conference – Austin, TX
- 25 **MERRY CHRISTMAS! (TSTCI Offices Closed)**

Please note that TSTCI Offices will be closed December 23 – 27, 2002.