

Pennsylvania Telephone Association: Newly introduced legislation balances competitive provisions with consumer protections.

Text of July 15 press release.

HARRISBURG, PA - Legislation ensuring the customer benefits of a competitive telecommunications industry in Pennsylvania has been introduced in the House by State Rep. Warren Kampf, R-Chester/Montgomery. Known as the Telecommunications Market Competition legislation, House Bill 1608 builds on the provisions of Act 183 of 2004, which are bringing the benefits of universal broadband deployment to citizens all across the Commonwealth. The 2004 law also streamlined the regulation of landline telecommunications carriers so that cutting-edge services could be offered in a developing competitive marketplace.

“The bill balances the necessary regulatory changes due to advances in technology and an increasingly competitive environment with consumer protections,” Kampf said. “It’s a win for competition and for the consumer.”

President of the Pennsylvania Telephone Association (PTA), Steven J. Samara, said his statewide association, which represents the rural local exchange carriers (RLECs), worked closely with other incumbent landline phone companies and Rep. Kampf to balance the competitive provisions of the bill with a guarantee that all customers will continue to receive basic phone service.

“HB 1608 accomplishes that in several, logical ways by allowing RLECs the freedom to offer new services and technologies much like their unregulated competitors in areas where competition is the most intense, while maintaining affordable basic service and broadband in areas where there are no alternative service providers,” Samara said.

PTA member Pete McClure, Vice President of the North Penn Telephone Co., said that similar bills in other states have led to fears of customers losing basic phone service.

“While critics have characterized similar bills in other states as a convenient way for telcos to abandon customers, nothing could be further from the truth in House Bill 1608,” McClure said. “Like many of my peer companies in the association, North Penn has served sparsely populated areas in this state for decades and we want to continue doing exactly that. The provisions of the Kampf bill will allow us to serve our rural customers with the services they want at prices they can afford.”

The Pennsylvania Telephone Association is a statewide membership services organization that advocates for rural carriers and their customers. Additional information about the PTA is available online at www.patel.org.

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