



Washington wants to know



It's For You: A Way To Keep Phone Bills Down

(NAPSA)—Good news for anyone who wants to dial up affordable phone bills is a law that was drafted more than 71 years ago.

That law protects your right to access affordable telecommunications service no matter where you live in America. This right, known as “universal service,” was established by the Communications Act of 1934 and ensures that consumers in rural and geographically isolated areas receive the same affordable telecommunications services as those in urban areas of the country.

Today, some well-intentioned lawmakers are looking to rewrite our telecom laws and universal service is among the many issues on the table.

Universal access to telecommunications services has served as the foundation for building communications connectivity for remote populations for more than a century.

Those in favor of preserving universal service understand that community-based telecom providers built a communications network to serve the sparsely populated and relatively isolated rural areas of the country where the large carriers wouldn't go. These carriers—which serve approximately 40 percent of America's landmass—have historically been pioneers in deploying advanced technologies to their consumers.

Community-based providers have invested significantly in high-speed Internet infrastructure with robust DSL, broadband wireless and fiber-optic deployments. Over time, universal service funds have enabled rural telcos to not only maintain that infrastructure but also update their networks to ensure customers gain access to



No COMMUNITY LEFT BEHIND—Consumers in rural and isolated areas have the right to affordable phone service.

emerging technologies. Many believe the policy of universal service is more important than ever for ensuring all Americans have access to affordable emerging voice, video and data technologies, which enable them to meet commerce, national security and public health and safety goals and ensure no community is left behind.

Universal service means community-based providers can improve health care and education initiatives and supply better high-speed Internet service to rural areas.

Key to boosting economic development in rural areas is increasing access to advanced services. The goals of universal service have played a vital role in our national telephone penetration rate of nearly 94 percent. Continued support from this important policy will enable America to achieve a comparable rate of broadband penetration. To learn more about universal service, visit www.ntca.org. To find out how your legislator feels about this issue, write to U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C. 20510 and the U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C. 20515.