

**TeleCommUnity Alliance  
2004 Legislative Agenda  
Adopted by TCU membership April 28, 2004**

**Mission**

TeleCommUnity is an alliance of cities and counties working to ensure Congress is aware of and takes into account the role that local governments play in our system of federalism in the deployment of advanced telecommunications services to the nation's communities.

The outcome of current debates on Capitol Hill will have significant impacts on local governments, including local control over management of local rights of way, reasonable authority over telecommunications providers to ensure all local residents have access to advanced telecommunications services, assurances that public safety officials have adequate tools to communicate effectively in emergencies, and billions of dollars in compensation and taxes from private telecommunications companies which use public property. TeleCommUnity will continue to work in close coordination with local government groups to fight for the rights and interests of local governments and their residents.

This document articulates the broad policy and legislative agenda that the Alliance expects to pursue in 2004.

**GOAL 1: Preserving the Authority of Local Governments**

Federal telecommunications policy must recognize and respect the unique role local governments play in telecommunications policy. Local governments are a major consumer of telecommunications services; the leading partner/facilitator for the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure in our rights of way; and serve as the regulator of last resort.

Just as local officials played a critical role in deployment of cable television over the past two decades, they are eager for their constituents to have access to the latest advanced telecommunications services. Deployment of these services, however, cannot come at the cost of preempting local governments' ability to effectively manage the local rights of way, protect public safety, or diminish local revenues. Legislation currently under consideration in Congress could cost local governments hundreds of millions of dollars in longstanding telecommunications taxes and fees, while FCC policies take away local authority to oversee basic consumer protection provisions and reasonable customer

service standards of cable companies' high speed data services. TeleCommUnity will fight to preserve the traditional balance between granting industry access to consumers versus the basic obligations that all industries live up to as a cost of doing business.

This broad policy area will include such specific issues as:

- Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and IP-enabled services
- Broadband Deployment, regardless of technology (DSL, PPL, cable-modem)
- Broadband Universal Service
- Rights of Way
- Cable-modem
- Cable Franchises
- Consumer Protection and Customer Service
- HR 49/S 150, now S 2084: Internet Taxation issues

### **GOAL 2: Meeting Public Safety's Spectrum Needs**

City and County governments continue to struggle with inadequate communications systems for police, fire and EMT. In many cases, spectrum allocation policies have led to extensive communication breakdowns and lack of interoperability. The promise of future spectrum allocation seems destined to be delayed by industry, while proposals to modify existing spectrum allocation structures may place significant cost burdens on local governments. TeleCommUnity will fight to ensure that adequate communications spectrum is available for local governments to utilize, and that any changes in existing spectrum management will come with appropriate federal financial commitment.

This broad policy area will include such specific issues as:

- Public Safety Spectrum
- Interoperability
- First Responder Issues
- Adequate Funding for Local Homeland Security Responsibilities

### **GOAL 3: Articulating the Role of Local Governments in our Digital Future**

The ongoing transition from analog communications systems to digital carries significant benefits for citizens. It also means that the longstanding legal and regulatory framework that governs cable, telephone, wireless and the Internet are becoming obsolete or insufficient. Congress will be facing the challenge of how to regulate this new communications framework over the next few years. At risk is the historic role of local oversight management of the deployment of telecommunications services, and billions of dollars in cable and telecommunications fees. TeleCommUnity will participate in a coalition of partner organizations to begin development of forward-looking principles and position papers on how local governments should fit into this new digital framework.

Those principles and position papers will then become the basis of TeleCommUnity educational and advocacy efforts in Congress.

Principles and position papers will reflect such policies as:

- The preservation of local rights of way management and taxation authority
- Recognition of local governments' role as consumer advocate
- Recognition of local governments' role as a consumer and provider of advanced telecommunication services
- Local governments' ability to require participation and contribution by service providers to 911/E911 programs.