

MODERNIZING ALASKA'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS LEGISLATION

Many of Alaska's current telecom statutes have not been updated since 1990, two years before dial-up, the most antiquated form of commercial internet service, was available to the public. How consumers communicate has changed dramatically during this time. Consumers' demand for landline phones has decreased drastically while their use of wireless service, social media, text messaging and other platforms to communicate grows. After 30 years, it's time Alaska updates the statutes for this century

NEW LEGISLATION WILL:

- Update decades old telecom laws that discourage investment and innovation.
- Provide regulatory efficiency for the Alaska Regulatory Commission and telecom providers.
- Eliminate unnecessary filing requirements that provide no consumer benefit.
- Give providers the flexibility to focus on deploying modern technology across the state.
- Recognize the dramatic changes in the marketplace and allow traditional landline voice telecommunications to adapt and compete with new services.
- Ensure consumers still have access to telecommunications services in all areas currently served; providers prevented from discontinuing telecommunications service without federal or state oversight.
- Retain the Alaska Regulatory Commission's authority over numerous areas. For example, the Alaska Regulatory Commission will still decide which carriers can provide service in the state, whether a carrier can discontinue telecommunications service to a location, the structure and funding of the state universal service fund, and qualifying carriers as eligible telecommunications providers to receive federal universal service support.

SERVICE IN RURAL AREAS WILL CONTINUE

Updating telecom legislation also provides an opportunity to modernize Alaska's Carrier of Last Resort (COLR) obligations – a concept applicable in a monopoly market.

Alaska's COLR regulations create uncertainty for carriers.

- The obligations can be changed by the Commission at any time.
- And, the Commission applies these requirements in an inconsistent and confusing manner.
- Commission requires costly, time-consuming and burdensome regulatory proceedings to eliminate requirement even in locations such as Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau.

Yet, numerous protections will remain to ensure service to consumers in rural areas will continue.

- Commission will continue to have the authority to require a carrier to continue providing service to a location
- FCC requirements and oversight will remain so that existing customers in rural areas will continue to have service

We can reform Alaska's telecommunications laws and policies to ensure Alaskans stay connected while avoiding the regulatory inconsistency that discourages investment in next-generation communication services.

It's time to update Alaska's telecommunications policy to help ensure the state is not falling behind the lower 48.