

TO: Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature

**FROM: Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association (WSTA)
Wisconsin Cable Communications Association (WCCA)
AT&T Wisconsin**

RE: Support for Assembly Bill 696 and Senate Bill 469

DATE: Thursday, April 15, 2010

We respectfully request your support of Assembly Bill 696 and Senate Bill 469, the first significant efforts to update Wisconsin's telecommunications statutes since 1993 Wisconsin Act 496.

Collectively, we represent a diverse group of small and large telecommunications providers offering service to the majority of Wisconsin's landline customers. Our residential and business customers live and work in rural, suburban and urban communities throughout our state. We have come together to support this legislation because we recognize the consumer benefits that will result from updates to the statutes governing Wisconsin's highly competitive telecommunications marketplace.

Wisconsin's last major telecommunications reforms were approved by the legislature nearly 20 years ago. At the time, competition in the telecommunications marketplace was in its infancy. Many of the technologies we use today for phone service did not even exist. Wireless competition was virtually non-existent. Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), or Internet telephony, had not yet been invented.

Because of changes in technology and the resulting benefits in bringing new products and services to the increasingly competitive landscape, Wisconsin's telecommunications laws need to be updated. AB 696 and SB 469 contain the necessary updates, while also maintaining important protections. The legislation:

- Updates statutes regulating incumbent and competitive providers so competition can occur on a more level playing field. This parity will bolster the increasingly competitive marketplace and benefit consumers;
- Maintains the Public Service Commission's (PSC) powers over wholesale relationships between carriers. For effective competition to continue, the PSC oversight over wholesale relationships must continue; and
- Retains strong consumer protections at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). While competition is the greatest consumer protection, DATCP rules need to be retained to ensure that fraudulent practices are outlawed and that violations can be prosecuted.

We are also supporting an additional amendment to the legislation to preserve the provider-of-last-resort obligation. We believe this amendment will further strengthen the bill from a consumer perspective.

AB 696 and SB 469 were the subject of an extensive joint public hearing by both standing utility committees on February 9, 2010. Valuable input was received during the joint hearing. The amendments added to the bills during the committee process reflect this valuable public input, improved the legislation, and resulted in broad bipartisan votes in both the Assembly and Senate committees.

To ensure that Wisconsin consumers continue to receive the maximum benefits from telecommunications competition, we urge you to support AB 696 and SB 469.