

Open The Net, A CALL TO ACTION

A group of community minded people from McHenry County have been watching the progress of the telecommunications industry. We believe that the time has come to break the reconstituted Duopoly of the telecommunications industry split between a handful of Telephone and Cable Companies. Although we feel there is a possibility to find allies in the cable and CLEC communities, the major telephone providers are in our opinion beyond hope.

We are now more than ten years beyond the signing of the 1996 Telecommunications Act and the result has been less competition, higher service costs and the United States having slipped behind more than half the industrialized nations in Broadband. This is the exact opposite of the original goal of the Act. If we go back to 1996, Chicago was once one of the top three broadband deployment centers of the world. What has transpired is an embarrassment. People in Illinois should be OUTRAGED.

We have seen larger percentages of household income being consumed by telcom services even though costs of technology, service deployment and bandwidth continue to go down. Why, because at every turn the FCC has allowed the same couple companies to dominate telecommunications. The "auction" system with its supposed competitive set asides have been a farce. We have seen the concept of the "Public Trust" vanish from the American telecommunications industry group. We have seen services like U-Verse, "cherry pick" wealthy communities and skip poor communities' altogether. And, we have seen Phone Company funded "Astroturf" fake community groups call Network Neutrality, the very foundation of the Internet, "a concept of the lunatic fringe".

We therefore suggest that the time has come for a new direction in telecommunications, or if you prefer a return to the pre-1996 Act model when small entrepreneurial ISPs were driving innovation across the county. Had the 1996 Act not been passed and more egregious, had the FCC NOT failed in enforcing the rules; we would see a completely different business landscape. Rather than fostering competition and innovation, the FCC allowed the 1996 Telecommunications Act to be used by the Telcos as a war club to unfairly and illegally destroy thousands of small American business's.

The simple fact is that the network is different today. IP networks are easier to manage, and with a network of "open" infrastructure, there is no reason why local government could not foster a new generation of service providers.

It is time to recognize that the Telcos attempt to convert the Internet into another Top Down TV Version #2 is simply a BAD IDEA. It is a waste of technology simply to prop up a business model that has failed without legislation to prop it up. We therefore put out the call to interested parties to help us to develop a series of evolving White Papers and Feasibility Studies for the specific purpose of creating these next generation "bottom-up" locally driven networks.

What we are suggesting is a series of private/public partnerships to fund high capacity wireless and fiber backbones owned in tiers by County, Township and local government as a platform for local business development. A 100% digital IP based 5E Switch (a phone switch) can be built for very little money. Locally owned business, and therefore locally churned revenue benefits the local economy many times over as compared with money that leaves the community. Other than national backbone providers, the technology has grown beyond the need for national service provider monopoly business models. Local business can better address the specific needs of the local market. The days of one size fits all and the rest is pay per view/use is over.

This new direction requires a new look at the way technology is deployed and managed. The good news is that IP technology already supports this kind of network model just fine. We are NOT inventing new technologies, but simply putting what we have to far better use than the Telcos have done. The rejection of WIFI by the telcos is not a case of failed technology, it is recognition by them that they can not own a public spectrum. If they can not turn it into a monopoly, then they will deploy a technology that supports their dinosaur business model.

This new direction will also need the creation of a new kind of CLEC that is locally owned and can not be consolidated by a cash rich monopoly. This means new laws to define the new kind of service provider. Just as we did in the 1990's during the early commercial phase of the Internet, Illinois CAN and SHOULD take a leadership role. We invite you to join in this effort and create a new era in Illinois Telecommunications.

We invite any interested parties who wish to join this collaboration, join the alliance at the URL
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Illinois_Open_Network_Collaboration