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**GROUPS LAUD PASSAGE OF KEY RURAL PROVISIONS IN CJS  
APPROPRIATIONS BILL**

*ADA Exemption and Primary Line Restriction Retained in Appropriations Legislation*

WASHINGTON –Four national associations welcomed the inclusion of key rural telecom provisions in the Commerce, State, Justice (CJS) appropriations conference committee today. The CJS conference committee approved language exempting the Universal Service Fund from the Anti-deficiency Act (ADA) through December 31, 2006 and prohibiting the FCC from imposing a restriction on universal service support known as the primary line restriction. “The conferees demonstrated their support for rural America and rural consumers,” said NTCA’s Vice President of Government Affairs and Association Services Shirley Bloomfield.

The conference committee approved language exempting universal service from the ADA, ensuring continued support for telecom investment in rural areas and ensuring that consumers’ rates remain affordable. “Today is a good day for rural America. By exempting universal service from the ADA, the conferees have removed a bureaucratic cloud that has been hanging over rural communities and consumers,” said John Rose, president, OPASTCO.

The conference committee also approved a one-year extension of the primary line restriction, which precludes the FCC from restricting universal service support to only one telephone line. “Restricting support to one line would inevitably increase costs to rural customers and small businesses that rely on additional lines to stay connected,” stated David Zesiger, executive director, ITTA.

The associations recognize the leadership efforts of Sens. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.), John Rockefeller (D-W.V.) and Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) and Reps. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), David Obey (D-Wis.), Rodney Alexander (R-La.) and Alan Mollohan (D-W.V.) on the ADA exemption. Additionally, the organizations praise Sens. Stevens and Dorgan for their extraordinary efforts on the primary lines exemption.

ITTA, NTCA, OPASTCO, and WTA/2-2-2

The associations voiced appreciation for the proactive approach by Reps. Barbara Cubin (R-Wyo.) and Charles Gonzalez (D-Texas) in sending letters earlier this week to the conferees to keep the ADA language in the legislation. House and Senate conferees voted on the appropriations language last night. The legislation will now be sent back the full House and Senate for final approval.

According to Bloomfield, “These members of Congress are true champions for the many Americans whose education, health care and economic development have been improved through the support of the Universal Service Fund.”

#### About ITTA:

The Independent Telephone and Telecommunications Alliance is an alliance of 12 midsize telephone companies formed in 1994 to represent its members before federal telecommunications policymakers. ITTA members currently operate in 40 states and serve approximately ten million local customers. Visit ITTA at [www.itta.us](http://www.itta.us).

#### About NTCA:

NTCA is a premier association representing more than 660 locally owned and controlled telecommunications cooperatives and commercial companies throughout rural and small-town America. NTCA provides its members with legislative, regulatory and industry representation; meetings; publications and educational programs; and an array of employee benefit programs. Visit us at [www.ntca.org](http://www.ntca.org).

#### About OPASTCO:

The Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO) represents more than 560 small, independently owned, local telecommunications companies serving primarily rural areas of the United States and Canada. OPASTCO’s membership includes both commercial companies and cooperatives, which range in size from fewer than 100 to 100,000 access lines, and collectively serve more than 3.5 million customers. OPASTCO represents rural telecommunications interests before federal regulatory bodies and Congress, provides publications, and holds two conventions annually in January and July of each year, addressing the needs of the small telecommunications industry. The association has an affiliate 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the Foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED). Visit the OPASTCO Web site at [www.opastco.org](http://www.opastco.org).

#### About WTA:

The Western Telecommunications Alliance represents more than 250 rural telephone companies in 24 states west of the Mississippi. Most members serve less than 3,000 customers overall, and less than 500 customers per exchange. The Western Telecommunications Alliance aims to unite a diverse industry to deliver influence in the western states and in Washington D.C. that reflects our member importance in providing high quality telecommunications services for rural Americans. Visit the WTA Web site at [www.w-t-a.org](http://www.w-t-a.org).