

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 16, 2005

Contact: Jay Driscoll, ITTA 202-355-1388

Caitlin Colligan, NTCA 703-351-2086

Michael Mallinger, OPASTCO 202-659-5990

Derrick Owens, WTA 202-548-0202

## **RURAL GROUPS LAUD SENATE ACTION ON UNIVERSAL SERVICE PROVISIONS**

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Senate today passed the Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations bill that extends the exemption of the federal universal service programs from the Anti-Deficiency Act. The CJS bill also prohibits the FCC from using funds to implement a proposal to limit USF support to only one telephone line. The bill now heads to President Bush for his signature. The four rural trade associations including the Independent Telephone & Telecommunications Alliance (ITTA), the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA), the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO), and the Western Telecommunications Alliance (WTA) applaud Congress for the adoption of these two important provisions.

The following statement is from OPASTCO President John Rose:

“Today we take one step closer to removing the cloud hanging over rural consumers and communities. We are extremely grateful that Congress decided to protect rural consumers by eliminating these two provisions for another year and look forward to President Bush’s signature. By enacting the ADA exemption and primary line restriction, consumers will have fair access to telecommunications services at affordable rates. We look forward to working with our friends to make both exemptions permanent next year.”

###

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 NTCA at [www.ntca.org](http://www.ntca.org).

-more-

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

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).