



April 6, 2009

Give Consumers, Taxpayers, and Small Businesses a Break through Telecom Regulatory Reform!

Dear Legislator:

On behalf of the 24,000 Florida members of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I urge you to expeditiously enact the Florida Consumer Choice and Protection Act (HB 1465 in the House and SB 2626 in the Senate). The pace of developments in communications technology and a sagging economy that is weighing on consumers and small businesses make this an ideal time to revisit antiquated and unproductive regulatory schemes.

Florida's telecommunications market suffers from laws created years ago, before innovations such as fiber-optic networks and cable TV-based phone and Internet service expanded choices for consumers. Price controls, information-sharing requirements among providers, and government-directed service-packaging limits are all hampering the ability of Floridians to find the communication option that *serves* them best at a cost that *suits* them best.

As you may know, NTU has taken an active role toward regulatory policy in numerous sectors, so as to fulfill one of its key objectives: an economy that emphasizes freedom of choice and entrepreneurship in which government plays a limited and sensible role. For example, NTU has advocated in favor of statewide franchising reforms that allow the entry of new competitors into the video, voice, and data delivery markets.

Given this institutional history, we are confident that HB 1465 and SB 2626 will result in a number of positive advantages for the state and its citizens. Although the bill is officially estimated to be fiscally neutral, it is possible that the state (and taxpayers) could save administrative costs in the long run by providing regulatory clarity and transparency. In addition, consumers and small businesses could, by some projections, save more than \$7 billion through the benefits of competition and choice. Furthermore, modernizing Florida's telecommunications laws will create productivity gains and employment opportunities connected with new services and their providers.

Perhaps most importantly, HB 1465 and SB 2626 would provide exactly the right kind of economic stimulus that Floridians need – one that does not rely on massive subsidies from Washington or make-work projects funded by the state. For this reason alone, NTU believes that a vote in favor of HB 1465 and SB 2626 is indeed a pro-taxpayer vote. Our members look forward to seeing this legislation adopted with all deliberate speed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pete Sepp", written over a white background.

Pete Sepp
Vice President for Policy & Communications
National Taxpayers Union