



Senate Commerce Committee Field Hearing Testimony

Len Pitcock, Executive Director, Arkansas Cable Telecommunications Association

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I'm Len Pitcock, Executive Director of the Arkansas Cable Telecommunications Association. We are an industry organization comprised of a dozen cable and broadband operators here in the state. Our membership ranges from several of the country's largest multi-system operators, to smaller family-owned companies with a few hundred customers. The Association also has two municipally-owned cable systems included in its membership.

Broadband deployment in Arkansas has played a pivotal role in the growth of our industry over the past 10 years. Our membership has connected Arkansans with the rest of the world through the private investments we've made in our businesses. From the fastest growing metropolitan areas of our state in Northwest and Central Arkansas, to the smallest communities in the Delta, many Arkansans are taking full advantage of the technology available to them today.

Haynes, Arkansas is a prime example of the Arkansas cable industry's commitment to rural broadband deployment. This small Delta farming community of 187 residents is miles from the nearest population base. Yet cable's investment in the area has resulted in 18 high-speed Internet customers. That's 10% of the entire community.

The broadband investment in Haynes, Arkansas, like almost all across the state was made with no government assistance whatsoever. As I'm sure many of you have heard before, the cable industry takes great pride in the fact that we have collectively invested over 100 billion dollars in private capital deploying broadband across the country in recent years. Arkansas companies have easily spent over a half billion dollars. These expenditures result in jobs, tax revenues and many other economic factors contributing to our state's financial well being.

This is not to say we are done however. One Arkansas community without access to broadband services is one too many.

The cable industry is not, and never has been, opposed to government incentives for the deployment of broadband. In many cases, we recognize policy measures may be

the only avenue available to further deploy broadband to portions of the state that might not realize it any other way. Our position has been, and remains today, that government assistance should be closely monitored and available only to areas without service.

Government subsidized competition occurs when incentives are available to providers to deploy broadband in areas that already have it. This is our fear – the availability of tax breaks, low interest loans, or other economic benefits provided by the government for others to enter the market and compete with those who've already invested there.

Broadband deployment in Arkansas is important. The cable industry of the state takes its role as one of the leading providers very seriously. We were there on the front end and will continue to assist Arkansans in our collective effort to be a member of the global community. This concludes my testimony.