



Internet Association



February 3, 2016

The Honorable Lyndall Fraker
Chairman, Utility Infrastructure Committee
Missouri House of Representatives
201 West Capitol Avenue
Room 304-A
Jefferson City MO 65101

Dear Chairman Fraker:

We, the private-sector companies and associations listed below, urge you not to pass HB 2078. As applied to advanced communications capabilities and services, the bill would impose so many restrictions and make the referendum process so onerous that it would amount to a virtual ban on local choice. The bill will harm both the public and private sectors, retard economic growth, prevent the creation or retention of jobs around the State, particularly in rural areas, hamper work force development, and diminish the quality of life in Missouri.

In particular, HB 2078 will hurt the private sector by derailing or unnecessarily complicating and delaying public-partnerships, by interfering with the ability of private companies to make timely sales of equipment and services to public broadband providers, by denying private companies timely access to advanced networks over which they can offer business and residential customers an endless array of modern products and services, and by impairing economic and educational opportunities that contribute to a skilled workforce from which businesses across the state will benefit.

The United States must compete in a global economy in which advanced communications networks are playing an increasingly significant role. The U.S. needs affordable access to such networks in as many communities as possible, as rapidly as possible, so that innovators can develop next-generation applications and services that will drive economic growth and global competitiveness. Unfortunately, in many of America's communities, particularly in rural areas, the current communications service providers are unable or unwilling to invest in advanced communications networks rapidly enough to enable the communities to stay abreast of their peers elsewhere in the United States and around the world. These communities should be free of artificial barriers, including the cumbersome, time-consuming, expensive, and ambiguous requirements of HB 2078, to do their part to help bring affordable high-capacity broadband connectivity to all Americans and to advance America's global competitiveness.

Communities in Missouri and across America are eager to work with willing established carriers, enter into public-private partnerships with new entrants, develop their own networks, if necessary, or create other innovative means of acquiring affordable access to advanced communications capabilities. These are fundamentally local decisions that should be made by the communities themselves, through the processes that their duly elected and accountable local officials ordinarily use for making comparable decisions. They should also be able to use their own resources as they deem appropriate to foster economic development, educational opportunity, public safety, and much more, without having to comply with the restrictive bottlenecks that HB 2078 would impose.

We support strong, fair, and open competition to ensure that users can enjoy the widest range of choices and opportunities. HB 2078 would take us in the wrong direction. It is bad for Missouri communities, particularly rural communities, bad for the private sector, particularly high-technology companies, and bad for America's global competitiveness. **Please do not pass HB 2078 or any amendment or other measure that could significantly impair community broadband deployments or public-private partnerships in Missouri.**

Sincerely,

American Public Power Association
Atlantic Engineering Group
Coalition for Local Internet Choice
CTC Energy & Technology
Fiber to the Home Council
Google
National Association of Telecommunications Officers
and Advisors
Netflix
Next Century Cities
OnTrac
Telecommunications Industry Association
The Internet Association
Utilities Telecom Council

cc: Members of the House Utility Infrastructure Committee