

From: League Bulletin [mailto:LeagueBulletin@NCLM.ORG]
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No competition bill advances

The House Public Utilities Committee has approved a bill that seeks to prevent local governments from providing communications services, such as high-speed internet, telephone and cable. **HB 1587 – Local Government Fair Competition Act** is backed by the telecommunications industry as a way of discouraging competition from local governments. This same industry pushed for and won statewide franchising of video services last session, claiming that it was necessary to open up competition. Now, a year later, they find it to their advantage to stifle competition.

The bill places significant roadblocks and restrictions on any local government that wants to provide communications services to its citizens. Access to high-speed broadband service is critical for the future economic development of our state. The industry is not required to build out, or serve an entire community, and they have made it clear that they have no intention of investing in some rural and distressed urban areas. Local governments want to step up to the plate and provide services to their entire communities.

Mayor Bruce Rose of Wilson spoke to the committee on behalf of municipalities, noting that the citizens are tired of waiting for someone else to bring the infrastructure they need for the future. The City of Wilson has already issued \$18 million in debt to build a new fiber-optic network.

The League strongly opposes **HB 1587** because it seeks to undermine local authority to undertake enterprise activities and provide services to the citizens. This authority that has been upheld by the courts and, as a matter of public policy, should be allowed to continue. The proposal now goes to House Finance.

Please contact your members of the House Finance Committee:

Reps. Luebke, Gibson, Wainwright, and Weiss, chairs; Reps. Hill, Holliman, Howard, McComas, Womble, vice-chairs; Reps. Blackwood, Blust, Carney, Cotham, Cunningham, Daughtridge, Faison, Farmer-Butterfield, Folwell, Hall, J. Harrell, Jones, Lewis, McGee, Owens, Ross, Setzer, Stam, Starned, Tillis, Walend