

## Speaking Points in SUPPORT of SB17-42

**SB17-42 will repeal a law enacted in 2005 that prevents local governments from buying, leasing or constructing broadband infrastructure without first passing a local ballot measure.**

➤ **Broadband service is an absolute NECESSITY in this day and age**

Citizens around the state are dependent on the Internet for a multitude of services and aid:

- **Education.** Students need access to do their school homework, take standardized tests, conduct research for school papers and projects and take advantage of distance learning opportunities.
- **Employment.** Job seekers need Internet access in order to apply online for jobs and research employment opportunities.
- **Telemedicine.** Senior citizens in rural areas who cannot make a multi-hour trip to a hospital in the urban areas need access so their local clinic can connect them to a doctor through telemedicine.
- **E-Government.** Many governmental services are now offered online and can save citizens from having to miss work and stand in line at the DMV or apply for human services benefits.
- **Public Safety.** The lack of infrastructure in the rural areas also affects the traveling public that play in and travel to and through those rural areas. 9-1-1 service is often directly dependent upon adequate phone coverage.

➤ **Service to rural areas of our state is lagging, and it is hurting their economic competitiveness**

The state Office of Information Technology estimates that 30-40% of the citizens in rural communities in the state do not have adequate Internet speeds. In this day and age, communities that want to attract new businesses (and keep existing ones) absolutely have to have the necessary infrastructure in place. Twenty years ago this meant roads and water lines and a dependable energy source. But in 2017 it also means adequate **broadband** infrastructure. Rural businesses simply cannot compete in the global marketplace without it.

➤ **Going to the local ballot is a waste of time and resources**

In the last three years, 28 counties have asked their voters to allow the county to build broadband infrastructure – **and every single measure has passed by an average of 75%**. It is clear from these outcomes that going to the ballot is a waste of taxpayer time and money. Citizens want better service NOW and making these communities wait months for an election to take place is lost time and opportunity.

➤ **This is NOT about local governments competing with the telecom industry – this is about local governments PARTNERING with the telecom industry and other stakeholders to improve service in rural areas**

The industry has suggested that it is unfair for local governments to compete with the telecom industry and this would be a fair concern if it were the case – which it is not. A small handful of the more than 100 local governments that have passed ballot measures are seeking to

provide actual service to their citizens. The VAST majority of communities in Colorado are seeking to construct what is called “middle mile” infrastructure in order to ATTRACT local ISPs (Internet service providers) who would otherwise not be interested in serving these rural areas.

➤ **This problem is NOT confined to rural areas of the state**

While the digital divide is most acutely felt in areas outside of the Front Range, it is by no means just a rural issue. There are many parts of the unincorporated areas of the larger urbanized counties in the Metro Area that still do not have adequate broadband service. Canyons in Boulder County. The eastern plains of Adams and Arapahoe Counties. The foothill communities of Jefferson County. The citizens in these areas need access as well and oftentimes they are not getting it.