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November 28, 2011

The Honorable John McCoy
Chair, House Technology, Energy and Communications Committee
Washington State House of Representatives
141 Pritchard Building, Capitol Campus
Olympia, Washington 98501

Re: Retail Telecom Authority Legislation

Dear Representative McCoy:

The Washington Public Utility Districts Association (WPUA) appreciates the opportunity to participate in your discussions involving expanding broadband access to un-served and underserved communities. Your dedication to this issue is commendable. PUDs with good relationships with their local internet service providers would not want legislation that would affect those relationships. Although the WPUA is not actively seeking retail telecom authority we do support the principle of communities choosing to have essential utility services like broadband provided by public, nonprofit PUDs who are directly accountable to the people they serve.

The WPUA represents twenty-six PUDs in the state of Washington as well as one joint action agency, Energy Northwest. These PUDs provide electricity, water, wastewater and wholesale telecommunication services to communities throughout the state. We are committed to the cost-effective delivery of these services and to the principle of local control. As an association we do have some issues and concerns we wish to raise with you regarding the legislation we understand you will be introducing in the 2012 legislative session.

With respect to retail telecommunications authority, there could be some PUDs that would choose to provide this service if authority was provided. There are also PUDs that would elect not to provide this service. We all agree that the provision of retail service should be permissive, i.e. not mandated to be providers or providers of last resort. In addition the choice of providing this service should be a local issue, meaning that the local PUD authority should be the one choosing whether to provide the service or not. Also, as strong supporters of local control, the regulation of services should be locally controlled and not by secondary regulators

We understand that your proposed legislation addresses these concerns but felt it would be helpful to raise them at this point. We want to thank you for your continuing leadership on this matter. We stand, as an association, ready to help you and your committee as this issue evolves.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. M. Caan".

George M. Caan, P.E.
Executive Director
Washington PUD Association