



January-March 2007

SB 6003

From Jill Novik, Chapter President

Legislative Issues

Olympia 1: This February newsletter is being sent in March, because I wanted to be current on the Olympia update. As you know, there's been lots of action in Olympia this month, with statewide franchising in HB 1983 and SB 6003 topping the list. As of February 28, neither of these bills moved out of committee which should be the end for the year. I hesitate to say they're dead, because there's always a chance that things could resurface, but, for now, we can relax a bit.

Many cities and counties, as well as educational institutions, school districts, public access folks, and citizens wrote letters and emails and/or called their State representatives in opposition. Thanks to all of you who worked so hard to defeat these very bad bills.

In addition, WATOA worked with the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) to prepare for public testimony at the WET Committee meeting on February, 20, 2007 in Olympia. WATOA was ably represented by Judy Devall, immediate WATOA Past President (Granger, Zillah, Wapato, and Toppenish); David Kerr, former WATOA president (Bellevue); and Mayor Bill Baarsma (Tacoma). Judy addressed issues of PEG and the critical importance of franchise fees to the budgets of small towns; David spoke about Bellevue's experience that eliminating a build out requirement provides no guarantee of service; and Mayor Baarsma, discussed rights of way management and municipal authority. I spoke at the end about customer service and noted that both WATOA and many of our cities had offered to work with Qwest, but that, to date, Qwest has been unwilling to negotiate with any of us unless we agree to no build out.

Although we have probably dodged the bullet this year, we understand that WET Committee chair Erik Poulsen (D-34) is interested in taking a closer look at telecommunications services and state regulation, so expect this to be a topic of conversation in committee meetings later this year and in the next few years.

Olympia 2: SB 5120 has moved from the WET Committee to Ways and Means. This bill would establish a fund to survey state residents on broadband usage, focusing particularly on rural areas. As a subtext is to examine barriers, we want to be vigilant that local franchise authorities do not get cast in that light. WATOA, through Judy Devall, has offered WET Committee member Sen. Honeyford WATOA's assistance.

The Other Washington: Word is that Congress is not looking at omnibus telecom legislation as proposed last year. It looks as though there may be several more specific issue-related bills surfacing, so let's keep each other posted as we hear of anything coming up.

Career Opportunities: We are now posting job openings to the WATOA website (www.watoa.org) as well as to this newsletter. Please feel free to send us any openings as they become available.

NATOA Conference in Portland: Early notice that the annual conference is in Portland this year from October 1-6 at the Marriott Downtown Waterfront. Compared to distance locations, this provides a good opportunity for us to affordably attend. I encourage you and your electeds to attend. Please also be aware that for cities with fewer than 5000 subscribers, WATOA sponsors the Brian Wilson Scholarship for \$600. Previous winners include Woodinville and Toppenish. For information on the Brian Wilson Scholarship, please check the website at www.watoa.org or contact Chas Hilton (see below).

Workshop Poll: The Board would like to hear from you as to what topics would interest you for our next workshop. Possibilities include: Wi-Fi, legislative updates, FTTP, and PEG issues, among others. Please let us know what would be of interest. We are tentatively looking at an early June date in western Washington.

NATOA NEWS

COMMUNICATING WITH CONGRESS - NATOA encourages Local Governments to Communicate with Elected Officials. Visit www.natoa.org for examples and information. The Policy/Advocacy page has information on Telecom legislative issues.

NATOA Annual Conference
October 1-6, 2007 Portland, Oregon
www.natoa.org

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