

ASSEMBLY BILL 207/SENATE BILL 107

Testimony of Bill Esbeck

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**Before the Assembly Energy & Utilities Committee and Senate Commerce, Utilities
& Rail Committee**

Tuesday, March 27, 2007

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on AB 207 and SB 107...my name is Bill Esbeck and I am the Executive Director of the Wisconsin State Telecommunications Association.

On behalf of all of the members of the WSTA...whose membership includes Wisconsin's Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers, Internet Service Providers, and wireless providers...I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Representative Montgomery and Senator Plale for their work and commitment to addressing the outdated regulations that govern the telecommunications industry in Wisconsin.

Through their work in this field, Senator Plale and Representative Montgomery have recognized that advances in technology have created newly competitive markets for a variety of telecommunications services. I am confident that each member of the committees here today understands that few industries have experienced change in a more comprehensive way than telecommunications.

These advances in technology will only benefit consumers if you take action to reform government regulations that were implemented in a much different era.

The bills before the Committees today have accurately identified the need to update the regulations governing the increasingly competitive cable television marketplace. Eliminating the current bureaucratic processes to streamline video franchising will benefit consumers, encourage investment, allow the marketplace to determine the winners, and keep pace with the reality of advancements in technology.

Eleven other states have already acted to reform their state-level regulation to streamline their video franchise process. The WSTA applauds the efforts of the Representative Montgomery and Senator Plale to foster more competition in Wisconsin through a streamlined video franchising process.

This change is an important first step toward improved regulatory parity. Consumers also stand to benefit from revisions to laws that govern the other telecommunications services we all use everyday. I would like to thank Representative Montgomery, Senator Plale, and other committee members who have demonstrated their commitments to continue working with the WSTA on separate legislation that will update additional outdated telecommunications statutes.

By working to update Wisconsin's telecommunication statutes, we can increase competitive parity among telecommunications providers, which will ultimately benefit consumers.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Chairs and committee members to increase regulatory and competitive parity.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. I would be happy to answer any questions.