



Polar Communications Press Release
110 4th Street East / P.O. Box 270
Park River, ND 58270
701.284.7221 / 1.800.284.7222
www.polarcomm.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Polar Communications Leaders Take Rural Voices To Capitol Hill

PARK RIVER, ND – April 20, 2005 – As congressional representatives look at telecom topics like Internet Protocol (IP) enabled services, rural infrastructures and deregulation issues, representatives from Polar Communications wanted to make sure legislators heard from rural Americans on these issues. They did that last week at a legislative conference in Washington, D.C. Polar Communications General Manager David Dunning said the conference gave representatives from Polar Communications the opportunity to visit with Congresswoman Debbie Schultz (Florida), Congressman Adam Smith (Washington), and Congressman Stephen Lynch (Massachusetts) about the importance of telecommunications in rural areas. Polar representatives also had the opportunity to visit with North Dakota's own Byron Dorgan and Kent Conrad.

"In all of Rural America today, there are only a handful of ambassadors like Polar Communications who are willing to come face to face with our nation's leaders to make sure they fully understand how their decisions will directly impact the farmer, the small rural business owner and the families who live miles from their schools, shopping centers and even their neighbors," said Dunning "The issues that are before our legislature today will determine the future of Rural America perhaps more so than at any other point in our nation's history. Technology and the process to provide that technology to rural areas are what drive our interest in this conference. We attended because we believe it is essential to make sure that our national leaders understand the importance of ensuring that rural areas of the country have access to these new technologies. We discussed with our congressional delegation the status and possible outcomes of legislation that is pending today in Congress, as well as vital issues such as Universal Service which ensures that rural areas are not absent from the widespread availability of technology."

Sponsored by the National Telecommunications Cooperatives Association (NTCA), the conference provided rural telcos an opportunity to meet with local Congressional representatives one-on-one as well as in general meetings.

According to Dunning, topics discussed included:

- **Advanced Infrastructure** – Rural local exchange carriers Polar Communications are actively deploying and providing broadband to their communities. The conference gave rural telecom service providers an opportunity to present the work they're doing.
- **Intercarrier Compensation Revisions** – A carrier that uses another carrier's network should compensate for that use regardless of the technology utilized. As Congress looks at new technology like VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), any intercarrier compensation program must eliminate opportunities for regulatory arbitrage that could adversely affect the cost rural families pay for service. We also recommended a mandate to identify all traffic regardless of technology utilized, minimizing the cost increases to consumers.
- **Universal Service** – We support the expansion of the base of revenues that are assessed for universal service contributions, or identifying other alternatives that ensure all segments of the industry share in the support of the program. Universal Service is a longstanding commitment that ensures the existence of the nationwide integrated telecommunications network. The success of Universal Service has resulted in rural Americans receiving the most advanced technologies – i.e. Internet, broadband, video, and wireless.
- **Nondiscriminatory Access** – All providers should continue to have the obligation to allow other providers to interconnect with their networks. In order to have nondiscriminatory network interconnection, default rate, terms and conditions for access to, and use of the network facilities must be maintained as technology evolves.

Other topics discussed:

- Consideration of the flexibility of deregulation as it relates to the unique nature of rural markets.
- The rate of return available to rural carriers must be part of deregulation.
- Elimination of the federal excise tax on voice services, or make it applicable to all sectors of the industry to make the playing field level.
- Prohibition of government-based competition in the form of newly built, tax payer-subsidized communications systems.

Guest speakers for the event were Sen. Kent Conrad (D-ND) and Rep. Lincoln Davis (D-TN). Also, the regulatory portion of the conference featured two panels of FCC advisors who discussed wireless, broadband, VoIP and other issues.

Michael Brunner, chief executive officer for NTCA, said that the organization provides this opportunity to its members each year to carry a message to congress.

“The Legislative and Policy Conference is an important event for NTCA, because it allows us to draw on the strength of our membership and communicate with national policymakers at the grassroots level, which remains our best vehicle for advancing our interests,” said NTCA Chief Executive Officer Michael E. Brunner. “We are pleased that so many of our members nearly 600 individuals joined us in Washington to establish and refresh alliances with our lawmakers and regulators on Capitol Hill and at the Federal Communications Commission.”



L to R: Polar Representatives Ron Steinke, Cavalier; Brian Udby, Lankin; David Dunning, General Manager/CEO; Steve Currie, Attorney; and Peter “Kelly” McKenzie, Michigan as they head to Capitol Hill.