

# VOIP/NEW TECHNOLOGIES MUST NOT BE USED TO EVADE STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITIES

Small rural carriers are actively deploying



Series E

## Issue

VoIP, or voice over Internet protocol is an exciting new technology from the perspective of consumers and telecommunications providers alike. Indeed, just as they have with earlier emerging technologies, NTCA members are aggressively embracing VoIP. Yet there are challenges that are on the horizon

## Background

For nearly a decade, policymakers and others have engaged in the relentless pursuit of a competitive deregulatory telecommunications environment. While NTCA members have in many ways vigorously embraced these concepts, they concurrently have expressed concern over their potential to undermine the nation's long-standing commitment to universal service. Indeed, in case after case, policies have emerged that have in one way or another threatened the delicate cost recovery structure that is so essential to maintaining this national policy. The current debate over how to treat VoIP from a regulatory perspective is no exception.

## NTCA Position

NTCA strongly supports the idea that emerging technologies should

remain free of regulatory restraints—to the extent possible. However, under no circumstance can VoIP, or any other emerging technology, be allowed to be employed by carriers as a means of evading industry and statutory responsibilities such as paying inter-carrier and universal service charges. Specifically, NTCA believes:

- The enhanced service provider (ESP) exemption for Internet service providers should be eliminated as the reasons leading to its creation have long-since dematerialized.
- VoIP should be classified, as a telecommunications service, which would clarify that it is subject to universal service assessments and access charges, and the FCC, should refrain from forbearing from enforcing these mandates.
- Under the FCC's principle of "competitive neutrality" its rules on VoIP should neither unfairly advantage or disadvantage one provider or technology over another and therefore the VoIP providers should be subject to the CALEA and E911 requirements that are in place for other providers.

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