



For Immediate Release

New OpEd on Deployment Agenda in Skinny Wire

INCOMPAS CEO Chip Pickering Says More Competition Depends on Speeding Up Pole Attachments, Small Cell Deployment and Ending Monopoly Contracts at Apartment and Condo Buildings

Washington DC (July 20, 2017) – INCOMPAS CEO Chip Pickering published an Op-Ed in Skinny Wire Magazine today, arguing for a better approach to broadband infrastructure deployment policies. Pickering promotes ‘one-touch make-ready’, and illustrates how speeding the process for pole attachments will bring more competition. He also addresses the opportunities wireless and small cell deployment hold, while calling for an end to monopoly deals that block apartment and condo residences from broadband choice and competition.

A link to the Skinny Wire OpEd is here:

http://www.walkerfirst.com/uploads/files/literature/Skinny_Wire_17S.pdf

Read the full piece below:

Broadband Deployment: A Path to the Future

By Chip Pickering

CEO of INCOMPAS, and a former Republican Member of Congress from Mississippi

I like to say we’ve never met a problem that more competition can’t fix. When it comes to wanting more broadband choices, faster speeds and lower prices, the rest of America agrees with me. Yet, over 51 percent of Americans only have ONE choice at home for broadband, and 38 percent have no more than two choices. That’s a whopping 89 percent of Americans stuck with little to no choice.

Busting consumers out of monopoly town has proven tricky. Since we passed the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and made competition the law of the land, smaller, more innovative companies have come onto the scene. Even though customers are desperate to try their service and these competitors are eager for the business, most still cannot connect.

Why? Building new networks is already a daunting task – a problem that is true in both rural America and urban centers – and bigger, incumbent players have been using every trick in the book to block new competitors from building out these new networks of the future. Much of this blocking takes place around infrastructure, like access to poles and multi-tenant buildings. Indeed, competitive wireless carriers seeking to upgrade their networks can sometimes spend more time and expense on regulatory approvals than it takes to deploy the new infrastructure.

How big of a deal is broadband deployment? Consider this: \$275 billion could be invested over the next seven years, which would create three million new jobs. While the intricacies of how companies expand their infrastructure may not be the world's sexiest topic, we simply cannot afford to ignore the resounding impact competitive broadband deployment—both wired and wireless—will have on our economy.

Consumers will see faster movie and music streaming services, businesses will grow with new software applications in the cloud, and communities will have better health and public safety systems that could mean the difference between life and death. And that's just the services available today.

Now consider the potential impact on future cutting-edge technology everyone is talking about—connected vehicles, drone delivery, the Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence. These services are going to require massive network infrastructure and new 5G networks that can carry a bigger data load with near zero latency. Looking at it this way, it's easy to see why network deployment issues are critical.

The good news is the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is currently reviewing how to speed infrastructure deployment for wired and wireless providers. With increasing consumer demand for reliable, high-speed connectivity, it is important our policies reflect advancements being made in this area.

One of their first areas for review must be pole attachments. Current practices and timelines are like molasses running uphill. In order to prepare poles for new connectors, each attacher already connected to the pole must move its facilities to make room – a laborious process exacerbated by the fact that attachers often work one at a time. We also cannot ignore the fact that existing attachers and pole owners with broadband service have an incentive to delay the process, as new connectors may be their competitors.

Currently, the process provides 60 days for *each* connector to make room for a new attachment. There is an alternative to this inefficient system. It's called one-touch make-ready. Here, the new attacher uses one approved contractor to perform all the 'make-ready' work to the pole in one procedure, rather than requiring sequential work that can take months on end to ready one pole for a new attachment. This will drastically cut down the time it takes to deploy new networks in addition to being safer for workers and more convenient to the public.

It's important to note that all levels of government can do more to work together and enable wireless deployments. The FCC and Members of both parties in Congress have identified that 5G deployment is central to economic growth and global competitiveness. Getting the small cell

revolution right will be key. If done right, we could see 150,000 small cell deployments by the end of 2018, and 800,000 by 2026.

To ensure this wave of new broadband investment in rural, urban and tribal lands, unnecessary governmental reviews on small cell deployment and the resulting costly fees should be eliminated.

Finally, the FCC should end monopoly power abuse in apartment buildings and condo complexes across America. These multiple tenant environments, or MTEs, have long been a barrier to deployment, more competition and lower prices for consumers.

The FCC has addressed this problem in the past, but sweetheart deals between big cable and landlords are locking up consumers and keeping competitors out of these buildings. This makes it impossible for customers to access better deals, services, speeds and prices from competitors. Renting an apartment shouldn't mean giving up your American right to competition and tenants in these buildings would be well-served to have the FCC prohibit practices – like revenue sharing and exclusive wiring arrangements – that stifle competition in MTEs.

Thankfully, we believe the FCC is on the right track to streamline infrastructure deployment in several proceedings. INCOMPAS and its members are participating in those proceedings to help lower barriers to competitive deployment.

We know that these important reforms will help to increase competition in the market and provide diversity in customers' choices. More choices will benefit consumers, both in price and in the quality of services being provided. Expanding broadband infrastructure will benefit small businesses and entrepreneurs who need reliable, high-speed internet to launch new ventures. Education improves when students can go home to reliable internet service to aid them in their studies. The expansion of broadband into underserved communities will also bolster local economies and spur job creation.

It's time America puts competition in the position to win the future.

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About INCOMPAS:

INCOMPAS, the Internet and competitive networks association, is the leading trade group advocating for competition policy across all networks. INCOMPAS represents Internet, streaming, communications and technology companies large and small, advocating for laws and policies that promote competition, innovation and economic development. Learn more at www.incompas.org or follow us on Twitter: @INCOMPAS @ChipPickering