COMPTEL Underscores Importance of Maintaining Competitive Interconnection Policies in Transition to IP

WASHINGTON, D.C. – COMPTEL, the leading trade association for the competitive communications industry, today emphasized in comments filed with the Federal Communications Commission the importance of maintaining interconnection policies consistent with the Telecommunications Act of 1996 that foster competition as the public switched telephone network (PSTN) transitions to Internet protocol (IP) technology.

In response to a public notice – in which the FCC Technology Transition Policy Task Force seeks comment on potential trials on the IP transition – COMPTEL focused its comments on the interconnection trial, stating that a technical or regulatory trial is not needed. COMPTEL noted that the “technical feasibility of VoIP interconnection has already been established. The largest ILECs [the RBOCs] have the facilities in their networks to exchange voice traffic over the PSTN with other carriers on an IP-to-IP basis. All that is truly needed to move the industry forward in the transition is for these ILECs to comply with the interconnection provisions of the Act by amending their existing interconnection agreements to address VoIP interconnection.”

“Consumers should not have to wait any longer to reap the benefits of this new technology,” said COMPTEL CEO Jerry James. “Our members have been at the forefront of the IP transition for more than a decade. While interconnection for VoIP is happening all over the world, the U.S. market has seen delays not because of technical issues, but because of the unwillingness of the RBOCs to enter into interconnection agreements in accordance with the mandates of the ’96 Telecom Act. This is the problem that needs to be addressed by the Commission immediately to promote the IP transition in the U.S.”

Additionally, COMPTEL recommended that if the Commission wants to further facilitate the IP transition, after declaring that Sections 251 and 252 apply to VoIP interconnection, it could also oversee a negotiation of a master interconnection agreement between competitors and an RBOC. This interconnection agreement, in accordance with the Act, could be submitted to the states for approval and made available for other carriers to opt-into or use as a template for in-state negotiations under the Act. COMPTEL believes this potential action, with a managed negotiation timeframe of six months, could potentially speed the IP transition process.

COMPTEL noted in its comments that the Commission can advance competition by also ensuring competitors have access to the last mile facilities necessary to reach end-users regardless of the transmission facility, such as copper or fiber, or the electronics attached, such as packetized or TDM.
Read COMPTEL’s full comments here.

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About COMPTEL
Based in Washington, D.C., COMPTEL is the leading industry association representing competitive communications service providers and their supplier partners. COMPTEL members are entrepreneurial companies driving technological innovation and creating economic growth through competitive voice, video, and data offerings and the development and deployment of next-generation, IP-based networks and services. COMPTEL advances its members’ interests through trade shows, networking, education, and policy advocacy before Congress, the Federal Communications Commission and the courts. COMPTEL works to ensure that competitive communications providers can continue to offer lower prices, better service, and greater innovation to consumers. For more information, visit www.comptel.org.