



# TeleState

News from the Illinois  
Telecommunications  
Association representing  
the Telecommunications  
Industry in Illinois

Volume Eighteen, Number One

Spring 2009

## ***ITA Applauds Work Toward National Digital Inclusion Plan***

National groups are recognizing the increasing importance of building consumer support for and usage of the growing broadband Internet infrastructure in the United States, and the members of the Illinois Telecommunications Association applaud the work being proposed for just this purpose.

Specifically, the US Internet Industry Association (USIIA) has begun a project designed to support creation of a national broadband policy for the U.S. that is built upon the concept of “digital inclusion.”

“For several years, we in Illinois have been talking with policymakers about the legitimate role of government in incenting the use of a broadband Internet network so that it makes economic sense for the private sector to build the infrastructure,” said Philip Wood, Chairman of the Illinois Telecommunications Association board. “If consumers know how to put the power of broadband to work for their own business and personal uses, the demand for the infrastructure will grow, the state and the country will benefit from the investment, and the economy will expand in new and exciting ways.”

The USIIA is working to elevate an awareness of the issue of Digital Inclusion among policymakers with the goal of developing specific, measurable initiatives to boost broadband adoption rates among consumers as a part of a National Broadband Plan.

According to the USIIA, the 2008 Global Information Technology Report rates US broadband infrastructure as 4<sup>th</sup> in the world and improving, while the U.S. places 15<sup>th</sup> in the world for the percentage of consumers adopting broadband. This report leads to the conclusion that deployment is good but consumer adoption is lagging.

“Government has a vested interest in encouraging consumers to be comfortable with and to regularly use broadband because this justifies additional build-out, moderates the cost to individual consumers, and stimulates new products, services and applications in response to consumer interest,” said Wood. “The overall result is to create a more highly trained and better educated workforce that will facilitate economic development here and will help the state and the nation remain competitive worldwide.”

# **Madison Telephone Partners with Hospital To Improve Rural Healthcare**

In the latest example of the commitment by local telecommunications companies to the communities they serve, Madison Telecommunications in Staunton celebrated in February a new partnership with the Staunton Community Memorial Hospital. Madison Telecommunications, the hospital, and local community leaders and legislators all praised the installation of a new CAT scan at the hospital which connects to other health care providers through a broadband fiber application installed by Madison Telecom.

The company worked with the hospital to install this fiber connection which gives the hospital virtually unlimited bandwidth to expedite the transfer of diagnostic information and allow for future expansion.

“This partnership will serve as a model for other rural communities around the state,” said Doug Dougherty, president of the Illinois Telecommunications Association. “I hope that, working with local phone companies, a rural community can find that anchor tenant which makes the business case for capital investment. Once the fiber network is deployed within the community, the costs for connectivity are significantly reduced.”

Bob Schwartz, president of Madison Telecommunications, and his key staff worked with hospital personnel who had been frustrated by the slow rate of data transfer to coordinate the broadband connection and the installation of a new, state-of-the-art CAT scan machine. Before the upgrade, the hospital shared a T-1 line with local schools and the city government. With the fiber connection, the new scanner can transfer images in a second, rather than the 20 minutes it would previously have taken.

State Senator Deanna Demuzio and then-Representative Gary Hannig attended the ceremony to underscore the importance of this type of partnership to rural Illinois.

Demuzio described the project as the result of “innovative thinking,” and Hannig observed that “When you’re in a small community like Staunton, you have to work together to get things done.”

Schwartz noted that new technologies improve the delivery of health care services through advanced speeds and new applications. With the vitually unlimited bandwidth of the new fiber connection, the hospital can quickly deliver diagnostic services today and has plenty of room for new applications and expanded use.

# President's Letter

What a busy spring! I have had the good fortune this year to see a number of initiatives with which the association has been involved advancing to the implementation stage. For example, over the past few years, I have been working with government agencies, the industry and interested community organizations to try to enhance and promote the development of broadband infrastructure and usage here in Illinois. Last year, we were successful in convincing Illinois policymakers to move \$4 million from the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) to the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), and that money is now providing funding for the implementation of the High Speed Internet Services and Information Technology Act. (You will find more details about this in the article on page 4). DCEO has awarded a contract and work will soon be underway to catalog what is available now and to develop a strategy to further promote the use of the broadband infrastructure.

The ITA also helped win legislative approval of a supplemental appropriation this year of \$3 million to the Department of Healthcare and Family Services (DHFS) and \$2 million to DCEO for use in matching federal stimulus funds for Health Information Exchange (HIE) Technology Improvements and broadband enhancement. Requests for proposals in this area have also been distributed.

With federal stimulus funds being made available for broadband deployment, health information exchange (HIE) and rural health facilities connectivity, the implementation of these three programs will better position Illinois to take advantage of these federal stimulus funds. Strong private/public partnerships are the key for getting the most benefit out of the federal funds and we are ahead of the curve in that regard.

*Doug Dougherty*

## In the News

**AT&T invests more.** This March, AT&T announced plans to invest in 40 new 3G wireless cell sites throughout Illinois in 2009 as part of its commitment to build networks that will create jobs and fuel economic growth. Some of these new cell sites will expand 3G access to new cities, including Champaign, Kankakee, LaSalle, Ottawa, and Peoria.

**ITA Convention Set.** The annual Illinois Telecommunications Association will be held June 7-10 in East Peoria. Please contact ITA staff for more information.

**ITAC Wins Award.** ITAC was named "Best Accessibility Provider" at the 2009 Deaf Illinois Awards in Chicago this April. Congratulations!

# DCEO Awarding Broadband Promotion Contract for State

At this writing, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is in negotiations to award a contract to promote statewide broadband deployment and use to an Illinois not-for-profit group, the Partnership for a Connected Illinois. In keeping with the requirements of the High Speed Internet Services and Information Technology Act, this new not-for-profit group will implement a comprehensive, statewide high-speed Internet deployment strategy and demand creation initiative.

The initiative is designed to: ensure that all Illinois consumers have access to affordable and reliable high-speed Internet; improve technological literacy and use; create local technology planning teams in each county or region; and promote technology investment.

Connected Nation, a national not-for-profit created to promote broadband deployment and use, Connect SI, a southern-Illinois not-for-profit with similar goals, and Southern Illinois University have teamed up to form this new not-for-profit organization that will work with DCEO for the Illinois broadband initiative.

The initiative requires: creation of a geographic statewide inventory of high-speed Internet service and other relevant broadband and information technology services; the tracking and identification of statewide residential and business adoption of high-speed Internet and related applications; the creation in each county or designated region of a local technology planning team with members from a cross-section of each community; collaboration with high-speed Internet providers and technology companies to encourage deployment and use; and collaboration with DCEO to develop a program to increase computer ownership and broadband access for disenfranchised populations.

SIU's Rex Duncan, Director of Community Development and Outreach and one of the Partnership leaders, commended ITA's leadership in advancing a statewide broadband initiative. "Doug Dougherty's role in getting the original legislation through the General Assembly was crucial," Duncan said. "Doug, the ITA staff, and its membership are all to be recognized for their vision and determination to see the High Speed Internet Services and Information Technology Act through to a successful outcome. The timing of this project with national funding availability is remarkable. We are all very grateful to Doug and his team for their great work, and look forward to working with him in the years ahead."

The Illinois Telecommunications Association (ITA) was instrumental in working with state agencies to find funds to support this initiative. The ITA also worked with the legislative sponsors of the original Act to ensure appropriate roles for both public and private sector interests.

"We are looking forward to working with the organizations involved in this effort to help ensure that the private sector know-how and resources are directed most effectively toward the desired end result – improved broadband usage in Illinois," said Doug Dougherty, president of the ITA. "This work should help take this state to the next level in terms of the economic and daily life impact of broadband technologies and their applications."



A publication of the  
Illinois Telecommunications Association  
P.O. Box 730 Springfield, Illinois 62705

Voice: 217-572-1260  
Fax: 217-753-8661  
Email: ita@il-ita.com  
Web: www.il-ita.com

**Illinois**  
telecommunications  
association