



**Comments of Onno Husing
Before the House Interim Committee on
Government Accountability and Information Technology
on behalf of the
Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council (ORTCC)
December 3, 2008**

Regarding:

° **Report of the Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council (ORTCC) presented to the Seventy-Fifth Legislative Assembly**

° **LC 1886—Extends sunset on Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council to January 2, 2018. Changes council membership. Requires reports to Legislative Assembly.**

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

I'm honored to appear today before the House Interim Committee on Government Accountability and Information Technology to:

- (1) Present the *Oregon Broadband Policy Recommendations* (Report of the Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council (ORTCC), and
- (2) Testify on behalf of LC 1886—Extending the sunset provision and council membership change for the ORTCC.

Because you and your colleagues serve on this House Committee I am certain you have a keen appreciation how important broadband Internet access is for all Oregonians. Indeed, today, access to reliable and affordable quality broadband is a necessity, not a luxury.

Alas, Oregon, like other states in America, has a Digital Divide. That Digital Divide manifests itself in two ways. First, people with limited incomes (regardless of location) may not be in a position to afford a personal computer or a broadband subscription. Second, Oregonians in many rural communities live and work outside the range of a network operator offering broadband services.

Some try to make the case that access to satellite Internet service constitutes access to broadband for Rural Oregonians. I disagree. While satellite Internet service performs better than conventional dial-up Internet services, it is no substitute for a quality symmetrical broadband service (where you can upload and download information at comparable speeds).

I respectfully submit that *The Oregon Broadband Policy Recommendations* and LC 1886, taken together, will provide the State of Oregon a means to identify remedies for the Digital Divide (and to promote, through education, the full usage of telecommunications by Oregonians).

The people serving on the ORTCC do so without compensation or expense reimbursement. These talented people, with varied backgrounds, devote their time and talent to the ORTCC because they know lives can be transformed with high speed Internet services—through distance learning, economic development, telemedicine. Broadband services can also boost public safety.

If you attended an ORTCC meeting, I believe you'd be deeply impressed by the collaborative spirit and level of technical sophistication. It's a crossroads where information is shared, relationships are formed, and partnerships are developed to make broadband deployments in underserved communities a possibility. The topics and deliberations of ORTCC meetings may be viewed at www.ortcc.org.

At the national level and in some forward-looking states, the notion that we need a National Broadband Policy and supporting state broadband policies is gaining momentum. In many cases, valid economic reasons exist why a community or region is underserved (because sparsely populated areas make it hard to develop a business case). The members of the ORTCC support the development of public-private partnerships as a preferred way to overcome those barriers.

That's what I find most impressive about the ORTCC. At the ORTCC you have people from the private sector and the public sector working together on these important issues for the benefit of all Oregonians. Indeed, LC 1886 seeks to create even more places at the ORTCC for the private sector.

Telecommunications will continue to grow in importance because having the capacity to communicate through the Internet is mission critical for most organizations. If Oregon falls behind other states and other communities around the world in the quality of our broadband networks (wired and wireless), our ability to compete in the global marketplace will be damaged. The ORTCC has been, and, with your support, will continue to contribute to the effort to keep Oregon at the cutting edge of the global economy.

In closing, I urge you to adopt LC 1886 as a Committee Bill because the ORTCC has so much more work to do. I think we can look forward to having virtually every corner of Oregon served with broadband in the next several years. Having the State of Oregon support the ORTCC will strengthen our efforts to complete this historic task.

Respectfully Submitted



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and Member, Oregon Telecommunications Coordinating Council