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Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 109

**Testimony by CenturyLink
John Idoux, Kansas Governmental Affairs
Before the Senate Utilities Committee
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Thank you Chairman Olson and members of the Committee. My name is John Idoux and I am CenturyLink's Director of Governmental Affairs for Kansas. I appreciate this opportunity to express CenturyLink's support of Senate Bill 109.

CenturyLink Introduction

CenturyLink has provided communications services in Kansas for over 110 years and is the third largest telecommunications company in the United States providing broadband, voice, and managed services across the country. CenturyLink serves over 72,000 rural Kansans in 119 communities including Junction City, Fort Riley, Gardner, and 111 communities with less than 1000 residents. CenturyLink also provides wholesale transport services with more than 750 route miles of fiber optics throughout Kansas.

Senate Bill 109 Background

Where will the next disaster strike in Kansas? When will the next disaster hit? Will the next disaster be a tornado, a flood or some other unforeseen event? Or course, disasters cannot be reliably predicted but CenturyLink and other utility companies will be there to restore basic services and help the stricken communities recover and rebuild. Speed is of the essence in responding to a disaster, especially the restoral of critical infrastructure. In responding to disasters, CenturyLink utilizes not only its local work force but relies on its work force from neighboring states as well as a network of third-party contractors. Many times, these contractors are located out of state and may not have business licenses for Kansas. In other situations, the contractor may already have a Kansas presence but will bring in additional resources and manpower from nearby states. Senate Bill 109 temporarily reduces burdensome regulations and barriers for out of state workers to join local relief efforts in responding to declared emergencies. With fewer obstacles, Senate Bill 109 allows companies restoring critical infrastructure to decrease the response time to deploy staff and equipment to stricken communities and quickens the ability to provide critical resources to first responders, government offices, medical facilities and customers.

Helping Kansans

Senate Bill 109 is not about revenue, tax avoidance, deregulation or any type of competitive advantage; rather, Senate Bill 109 is about helping Kansans and the communities where they live return to a sense of normalcy as quickly as possible after a disaster. Senate Bill 109 is about getting critically needed resources – both people and equipment – to the disaster area as quickly and easily as possible. Senate Bill 109 will not only reduce the time it takes for critical infrastructure companies to deploy relief resources but will also lessens some of the headaches for out of state workers from stepping up to the challenges of recovery work. This legislative proposal was developed with the single goal of ensuring critical infrastructure is restored to communities throughout the state as quickly as possible after a disaster occurs.

An Unlikely Cast of Characters

Senate Bill 109 was crafted by an unlikely coalition of companies and associations operating in every corner and in every county of Kansas. The coalition represents over 75 individual telecommunications, electric, gas, cable and other infrastructure companies¹ that often times have opposing views on public policy matters. Yet, when disaster strikes, these companies all have a shared goal of helping Kansas and its citizens recover as quickly as possible. Similar legislation has been enacted in numerous other states. Both the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) have adopted model legislation similar to what was proposed in Kansas by the 75-plus companies represented by the coalition.

Conclusion

CenturyLink urges your support in passing Senate Bill 109 because it is a common sense approach to helping Kansas and their communities recover as quickly as possible after a disaster strikes. Senate Bill 109 reduces burdensome regulations and barriers for out of state workers to join local relief efforts in responding to declared emergencies.

Thank you for your consideration.

¹ In addition to CenturyLink, the coalition of companies supporting Senate Bill 109 include Atmos, AT&T, Cox, Empire, ITC Great Plains, Kansas Cable Telecommunications Association (representing 14 cable operators), Kansas Electric Cooperative (representing 29 electric distribution cooperatives and three generation and transmission cooperatives), Kansas Gas, KCP&L, ONEOK, Sprint, State Independent Telephone Association of Kansas (representing 21 rural telecommunications companies), Verizon and Westar.