

(Washington DC) Last night, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Communications Opportunity, Promotion, and Enhancement Act of 2006 (COPE Act,) a rewrite of the 1996 Telecommunications Act. The COPE Act will institute national franchising standards, empowers the FCC to enforce its broadband policy statement and principles and establishes Voice over Internet protocol (VOIP.)

"Our laws have now caught up to the rapidly changing field of telecommunications. No other sector of the American economy has been more dynamic than telecommunications as new technological advances are developed and made available every day it seems. The COPE Act will allow the forces of the market to continue to push this communications revolution forward.

The landmark Telecommunications Act of 1996 enabled the varied parts of the telecommunications field to flourish. And, this bill will usher in the next generation of technologies that will provide an even greater range of services for consumers to choose from. Markets will be opened to new competition, which fosters increased competition and lower costs for consumers.

I am pleased that an amendment imposing federal regulation favoring one internet business sector over another was soundly defeated. The deceptively but attractively named "net neutrality" amendment was a misguided attempt to tilt the playing field and was appropriately rejected since there was nothing neutral about it.

America is the birthplace of the Internet and most of the major advances we enjoy today. The COPE Act will ensure that we continue our role as the world's laboratory for new innovations in communications.

I anticipate that the Senate will consider and pass the COPE Act this year."