



# New Hampshire State Senate **NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Senate moves to modernize regulations for telephone service providers in NH** *SB 48 seeks parity; keeps new VoIP technology free of unnecessary regulations*

CONCORD – Recognizing that current state regulatory law concerning telecommunications dates back one hundred years and to rotary dials, the Senate Energy Committee voted unanimously today to modernize the regulations under which New Hampshire telephone service providers operate.

Under SB 48, lawmakers are seeking to level the regulatory playing field for all providers. By doing so, they intend to create an environment where consumers and businesses benefit from fixes to the current, uneven regulations which impede equal competition. Supporters of SB 48 argue this environment harms the public interest by failing to provide equal and non-discriminatory opportunities for competitive pricing and incentives for investment.

SB 48 prime sponsor Sen. Bob Odell, R-Lempster, calls the legislation necessary and long overdue. "This is a good example of how laws need to keep pace with technology," he said, "Telecommunication companies here in New Hampshire that provide landline services are seeking regulatory parity with cable and wireless providers. As the law stands now, landline companies operate under much more onerous regulations. When passed, SB 48 will represent a significant modernization of our current policies. We want the free market, not regulations, to dictate which companies gain or lose customers." He added, "Competition is already managing the retail market and creating better offers for customers."

Sen. Gary Lambert, R-Nashua, is also sponsoring SB 48. As an attorney specializing in patent and trademark law, he understands the negative effect old laws can have on new products and emerging industries. He said, "SB 48 also includes first-time language defining Voice over Internet Protocol or VoIP which is the conduit for being able to have a phone conversation using the internet. This information service was invented in 1994 and only became readily available to consumers in 2004. I am pleased we are adding VoIP to our upgrade of New Hampshire telecommunications law. All the upgrades in SB 48 show we're looking out for consumers and supporting businesses here in New Hampshire all at the same time. Across the country, 21 states have already passed laws deregulating VoIP, including Massachusetts."

Earlier, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) had voiced concerns that SB 48 would change its ability to regulate safety standards in the telecommunications industry. However, both Odell and Lambert are making it clear that under the bill, the PUC retains its authority to regulate safety, along with its ability to manage rights of way. The commission will also continue to have oversight over such issues as "slamming" and "cramming" – the illegal practices of switching carriers on a customer without his/her knowledge and putting unauthorized or misleading charges on a person's bill.

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