

UTC 2018 Resolution: Supporting Public Power Broadband Deployment

WHEREAS, utilities enable broadband deployment in multiple ways, most notably by permitting communications-service providers to use their infrastructure to bring their services to consumers across the country; and,

WHEREAS, more frequently, publicly and consumer-owned utilities are bridging the digital divide in areas unserved and underserved by private telecommunications firms by providing broadband service; and,

WHEREAS, economists, policymakers, and federal, state, and local government officials all consider broadband to be the key driver of economic development in towns and cities throughout the U.S.; and,

WHEREAS, private telecommunications service providers have determined that it is not economical to expand their broadband services to these unserved and underserved areas, even though in many cases utilities and municipalities have offered below-rate access to their infrastructure to do so; and,

WHEREAS, many unserved and underserved municipalities have set up their own broadband entities, in many cases partnering with their publicly owned energy service provider to bring affordable and reliable broadband to their residents; and,

WHEREAS, rather than compete against these publicly initiated broadband entities, the large telecommunications and cable companies have instead sponsored legislation in 20 states to prohibit municipalities from either getting into the broadband business in the first place or expanding their services beyond their city limits; and,

WHEREAS, these state laws unnecessarily restrict broadband deployment as private Internet Service Providers (ISPs) continue to show little interest in bridging the digital divide, as evidenced by a recent voter-approved measure in Fort Collins, Colorado, permitting the city to build a broadband network if economical; and,

WHEREAS, since 2015, Members of Congress have introduced the Community Broadband Act, which would disallow states from prohibiting municipalities, either through their public-power utility or other means, from providing broadband services to their citizens.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Utilities Technology Council (UTC), gathered at its Annual

Telecom & Technology Meeting in Palm Springs, California, recognizes the important role utilities play in bridging the digital divide in unserved and underserved areas; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that states and other government entities should remove any roadblocks preventing public power utilities from providing broadband services to their consumers, as prohibiting their entry into the broadband market could potentially harm their citizens and could potentially reward the private ISPs who chose not to invest in unserved and underserved areas; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that UTC supports congressional legislation aimed at achieving these goals; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that UTC supports utility participation in any rural broadband deployment initiatives at the federal or state level in legislative proceedings.

Adopted by the UTC Membership, May 10, 2018