

Dear Members,

I am forwarding you the below message from Friends of Municipal Broadband as a means of requesting your support to “kill” HB 2108, as amended.

Nelson County concurs with the talking points denoted herein and beseeches you to prevent this “horrible” legislation from proceeding any further.

If time could somehow permit, all of the localities, like Nelson County, would have you visit with them (us) to gain an in person insight into the efforts that local governments, like Nelson County, like the members of the Roanoke Authority, like the members of the Rockbridge Authority (RANA), like the communities on Eastern Shore, like Albemarle, Fluvanna, Louisa, Green and Orange counties and so many other local governments, who are committed to providing and are providing (like Nelson County) highly reliable internet services that enable broadband services to be received by businesses and residents in their respective communities, services which were not being received prior to the establishment of local government networks and are not being received in many areas of the Commonwealth because the private sector providers, which Del. Byron’s bill protects, will not do so.

All of the local government networks, like Nelson County’s, can tell you directly how difficult it is to establish local networks, to sustain them and to continue the expansion of this critically important service, which the private sector providers are not providing other than in markets where it meets their financial interests (not Nelson County or any of the other local governments mentioned herein and many more not mentioned herein).

Nelson County is currently working on a Route 29 Corridor Project for economic development purposes. A component of the project is a survey instrument that has received significant response(s). One of the questions in the survey is what services do you consider to be critically important to you and the overwhelming response has been – “we want broadband”! This is not a surprise to Nelson County or to any of the other local networks that are currently in place or working to be in place. And, the survey response begs the question, where are the private providers? The answer is they aren’t here and they aren’t coming.

Local governments don’t need any more obstacles in delivering or working to deliver high speed internet/broadband services to their community(s). There are plenty of challenges to this already and HB 2108 simply makes this challenge even much more difficult. HB 2108 is a road block to protect the interests of private providers who don’t provide.

Nelson County’s network provides services that exceed state and federal (FCC) standards. The County’s minimum circuit speed for Internet Service Providers (and the County has an open access network – competition) is 25/5, not 5/1, or 10/2; yes, 25/5 and 25/25 and 50/10 and 50/50 with the prospect of a one gigabit service to residential connections. Our challenge is the continued expansion of the network to provide services in our community as universally as possible (the goal is everyone). As with all of the other local networks, we don’t need more constraints. HB 2108 supports the interests of private providers, who, if they do provide any services only want the much larger business customers (it’s called “cherry picking”) and will bypass smaller business and residential customers to get to the bigger “fish”.

Set HB 2108 aside and come meet with us, step into our shoes and gain a clear perspective of what is being accomplished.

HB 2108 should never have been introduced or amended. Please prevent its passage.

Respectfully,

Stephen A. Carter
Nelson County Administrator
P. O. Box 336
84 Courthouse Square
Lovington, VA 22949
Ph. [\(434\) 263-7001](tel:4342637001)
Fx. [\(434\) 263-7004](tel:4342637004)