



Testimony of A.J. Villegas,
Communications Workers of America Staff Representative,
In Support of Senate Bill 350
Before the Senate Utilities Committee
January 31, 2006

Chairman Emler, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, good morning, my name is A.J. Villegas. I'm a Staff Representative of the Communications Workers of America. The CWA represents about 1,500 workers in Kansas and I help coordinate the activities of all CWA locals in the state. I started with Southwestern Bell Telephone in 1981 in the Residential Sales Center in Mission, KS, but have been on a leave of absence since July 2000 to work full time with the CWA.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to support Senate Bill 350 and its goal of updating Kansas' telecommunications laws.

I've worked in the communications industry for 25 years and have seen the dramatic changes that have occurred because of competition and new technology. The workers I represent are on the front lines in the battle to win and retain customers. We see firsthand the competition from cable companies and others. We need your help to ensure the CWA workers can continue to serve Kansas customers.

Without a healthy AT&T, CWA jobs are in jeopardy.

We have serious concerns about the future of the AT&T local service division when one company remains heavily regulated while the competitors are free from all price regulation. Senate Bill 350 will give AT&T the same pricing flexibilities as competitors enjoy.

Like any company, AT&T makes investment decisions based on the business climate of each state. I want to ensure that Kansas remains a state in which AT&T wants to invest money and jobs. Recently, AT&T announced plans to invest \$800 million in Texas. It's no coincidence that the Texas Legislature passed a telecom reform bill last year.

SB 350 is a common sense bill. It allows AT&T to price its services like its competitors do, but only in competitive markets. Consumers are protected by competition and stand to benefit from lower prices. With this bill, CWA employees could rest a bit easier, knowing their company no longer had to fight for consumers with one hand tied behind its back.

I urge you to support reform efforts, job retention, investment and consumer benefits. Support Senate Bill 350.

Thank you for your time.