

Consumer Advisory Committee

Recommendation: Consumer Outreach

The FCC's Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) has appreciated the openness and access to the staff. At each and every opportunity they have made themselves available to provide information and seek input from our members. This candor and communication has assisted the WG in looking at avenues to improve the FCC's ability to better communicate with the American consumer.

The CAC has been impressed with the strong efforts and progress in implementing new organizational structure, technologies and training to increase the effectiveness of the FCC in meeting consumer needs.

We recognize that resources (financial, staffing and technological) can limit rapid deployment of the FCC's efforts to meet the needs of the public. We believe that continued re-evaluation by the WG, staff and the Commissioners of the processes used is required and appropriate.

It is with this spirit that the CAC makes these four recommendations to the Commission:

- **Provide information to other government agencies in a regular and timely manner:** The FCC routinely gathers information from consumers and rapidly digests that information internally. The FCC uses this information to determine how to resolve complaints, for enforcement actions, and to develop potential public policy. Appropriate information is shared with carriers and other government agencies but some of this is done on a case-by-case basis. The CAC requests that the FCC develop a more formal process to share this information with local, state and other federal agencies on a regular basis. Timely sharing can assist other governmental jurisdictions that may miss an opportunity to root out fraud or resolve matters before they become more damaging to consumers. As an example, many, if not most, consumers who file a complaint with the FCC will not file that complaint with a state utility regulatory or law enforcement agency. A process to share information will assist the local government to better understand what is occurring in their jurisdictions.
- **Provide timely consumer education:** Education is critical to ensure the telecommunications market works properly for the American consumer. The consumer sees the FCC as a clear voice in a world of conflicting information. The FCC can play a more important role in assisting consumers make better decisions in the marketplace which can reduce misunderstanding and grievances. This will also lead to less need for burdensome regulations, which can result from consumer misunderstandings and complaints. Educational clarity by the FCC would provide both the consumer and the industry a great service and positive benefit. The CAC believes that the FCC must produce new consumer materials

online and in print (and update existing publications) that deal with the rapid changes in the market. These must be produced in a timely manner. The educational materials must be clear, concise and easy to understand. Some of the subjects could include information about purchasing mobile communication devices, VOIP services, resolving complaints and understanding charges and billing. The FCC should also consider web links with consumer, community, industry and state and national governmental organizations.

- **Provide educational materials in languages other than English and Spanish:**
The rapidly changing demographics of the America require that the FCC increase the number of languages used in consumer education and consumer intake units. The FCC has diligently worked to increase access to consumers who need or prefer to utilize Spanish when communicating with the FCC. The FCC needs to proactively determine what other languages should be employed in consumer education and FCC consumer in-take operations. Languages to consider include: American Sign Language, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, French, Russian and Arabic.
- **Provide captioning for FCC web casts:**
The CAC also recommends that all streaming video on the FCC's website, and all other FCC produced video, should contain captions and descriptions in conformance with Sec. 508 standards.

The CAC recognizes that the FCC staff has been moving towards many of the recommendations as a course of business. We believe that the current and future consumer Affairs and Outreach Working Group of the Consumer Advisory committee should follow up in order to assist the FCC in implementation.

Adopted: July 21, 2006