

Dear Connecticut Internet subscriber,

Several months ago I wrote to inform you of H.R. 1542, also known as the Tauzin-Dingell bill. At that time, many Internet users voiced their concern over the monopolistic tone of the bill. For those of you who contacted your representatives, we would like to extend a sincere thank you. Unfortunately, our collective last action was only a temporary delay. Thus, I write to ask you to voice your opinion again.

To understand the significance of this bill it is worthy of understanding that in 1996 a Telecommunications Act was passed by congress, which enabled many new companies, such as your ISP, to compete with larger companies such as SNET. This 1996 Act allowed companies such as your ISP to compete because not only could we offer more personalized attention but we could compete on price also. At the same time, it created an environment where new technology grew tremendously.

The official name of this new bill H.R. 1542 is "Internet Freedom and Broadband Deployment Act of 2001". The title implies that this bill would be very beneficial to you the end-user but it is very deceptive. To view the full bill you may visit <http://www.newnetworks.com/hr1542as20902.html> Pay close attention to the fine print which details the truth about this bill and is briefly described below.

First, H.R. 1542 only guarantees wholesale prices to competitive companies and Internet service providers, such as your ISP, for the first 3 years. After that the local companies, in this case SBC/SNET, would be able to charge retail prices, thus effectively cutting out any competition by other companies since companies such as your ISP would not be able to compete. The result would be that in less then 5 years the consumer would effectively have no choice in Internet service providers. (Section 232, subsection j-Exemption, part (2) RESALE on p. 8)

Second, details a fine point that has tremendous implications for the consumer. SBC, the parent company of SNET, started another company called ASI. ASI only deals with high speed services. SNET, for the purposes of this bill, is considered an incumbent local exchange carrier, which the bill details must make available high speed services to any Internet user. The fine point becomes that SNET in this example would not be dealing with high speed services. Rather it would be ASI and since ASI is not an incumbent local exchange carrier they would not be required to make it available to local Internet service providers, such as your ISP, thus not making it available to Internet users, also known as the consumer. Thus, another aspect of competition for the consumer would effectively be cut out. (Section 233, subsection b-Obligations of incumbent local exchange carriers on p. 9)

Third, this bill does not require unbundling of lines or equipment at remote terminals, which once more affects the consumer because the cost is more expensive for bundled lines and Internet availability is limited to remote areas, by not requiring equipment at remote terminals. (Section 232, subsection j-Exemption, part (C) and (D) on p. 7)

The House of Representatives is scheduled to vote on H.R. 1542 on Wednesday, February 27, 2002. For all of these reasons we encourage you, the consumer, to make your voice heard in the halls of Congress. Please contact all members of the Connecticut delegation and request that they vote 'NO' on H.R. 1542.

Due to the anthrax situation, mail is still being delayed getting to congress. Thus, it would be best if you phone them directly. Below are the members and their office number. Please ask to speak with a legislative aide dealing with H.R. 1542, Tausin-Dingell Bill when you request that they vote 'NO'.

You may also email your Congressional member by visiting the American ISP Association's website at <http://www.aispa.org> under the 'Take Action' section.

The following are all of our Connecticut congressional delegation.

Representative John Larson (202) 225-2265
Representative James Maloney (202) 225-3822
Representative Nancy Johnson (202) 225-4476
Representative Christopher Shays (202) 225-5541
Representative Rosa DeLauro (202) 225-3661

Senator Christopher Dodd (202) 224-2823
Senator Joseph Lieberman (202) 224-4041

As the American ISP Association noted in their recent newsletter, "Who will suffer when the giant Bell monopolies extend their stranglehold on local phone service into the Internet. We need to hold our Members of Congress accountable, and that can only be done if you take the time to let them know that promises made should be promises kept. If you don't do it, who will?"

Thanks for making your voice heard.

Sincerely,

Kenneth A. Reiss
Vice President
Connecticut ISP Association