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Connections



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Monthly insight into your telecom and broadband association

Current topics >>>

Who We Are

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What We Do

No, it's really not a secret. We work for you and on your behalf! Brant handles all things legislation and regulation. He is that poor soul that scours the Senate and House bills as they get introduced. He skims through all 1,800+ of them at the beginning of the year. Anything related to telecom, fiber and broadband gets input into our tracking system where he monitors and lobbies on the best interest of our members. Who wants to schlep around with representatives all day anyway? That guy!

On the other side, Mandy is the "face" (as Susan would say) of the OTA. She is tasked to serve as a liaison between the association and the member facing committees; helping them to plan engaging seminars and education while hailing as queen of

How We Operate

As a small two-person team, we will work together to make sure the OTA is a viable resource for you. We monitor, engage, and want to connect with each of our members. If we can make a difference for the good of the order, we will. To us, making a difference means doing the legwork so you don't have to. We want to support, educate and strengthen your operation. We do this through bill tracking, seminars and outreach.



A New Year Brings New Projects – We Dig In

Hello and welcome to the first edition of the 2023 format of Connections – a monthly newsletter to find news, updates and insight into all things Oregon Telecommunications Association. We are glad you are here!

One of our goals in 2023 is to become better connected to you, our members. To do that, you'll be hearing from us a lot! We'll be asking questions and getting personal to figure out how we can best serve you – because without you, there is no us. Have ideas for upcoming events, topics you want to hear more about, challenges that you are curious if your peers are also facing? Call us. Email. Lean in! Projects we've recently embarked in: saying farewell to a 20-year veteran (Susan Allen), updates to our accounting function, the directory, buttoning up dues, transitioning to a new payment platform to (hello, Square), revamping the Committees and newsletter!

Legislative Season in Full Swing | with Brant Wolf

The 2023 regular session of the Oregon legislature got underway in January. The OTA is busy tracking, monitoring and actively working on those bills identified as being of interest to our members. The very first hearing OTA monitored involved what was supposed to be a presentation on the lack of cell phone service during Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS). [This is a link to the presentation](#). You can see for yourself how widely that strayed from the advertised topic. Needless to say, it became a priority to follow up with each member of the Committee to make sure they know our ILEC members do still have network obligations and none of our members ever drop their customers.

The OTA Legislative Committee has reviewed the bills and will continue to meet during the legislative session. What follows are the bills that we have so far offered testimony on or otherwise been engaged with:

- **Senate Bill (SB) 635** – this would allow every county to implement a permit fee to do work along county roads. This one is a bit troubling because two Republican Senators are interested in finding ways to make this work for the counties. Both have also stated that whatever bill might eventually pass should not adversely impact rural providers so, we'll have to see what happens here.
- **House Bill (HB) 2757** – this bill establishes a 988 fee and fund to support the suicide prevention hotline. It also goes much further than the 911 fee and proposes to fund the actual response to the call, including the establishment of crisis response teams (plural) in *each city* in the state. Obviously, this is a problem. While we might be OK with a small fee for the infrastructure for a 988 system, similar to 911, I don't believe the OTA can be silent on paying for an entirely new state agency using your customer's bill to pay for it.
- **HB 2759** – this bill would make a "telecommunications company" liable for the use of automatic dialing machines or software if the company "knows or consciously avoids knowing" that those things are being used to make unwanted robocalls. In testimony, OTA pointed out that our members cannot arbitrarily decide to not complete a call that has been properly placed; if a number is dialed, we have to terminate the call properly. If the National Do Not Call registry can't be enforced properly that certainly does not mean our members should be held liable for the resulting consumer complaints.

While there are other pieces of legislation, we will eventually be busy with, these are the bills actively being worked on. If you want copies of this or the total bill list as of this date, please just let me know. I am also happy to talk about any of this or set up any meetings with your state Senator or Representative.

Spotlight: 2022 Ray Hawkins Safety Employee of the Year

This last Fall, the Safety Committee received three fantastic nominations for the annual safety employee of the year award. In November at the seminar, the Committee recognized all three candidates for their hard work and dedication to keeping their companies, their co-workers and themselves safe, secure and functioning!

It was exciting to see the nominations come in! The caliber of these employees was impressive and the words of the those making the submissions were thoughtful, sincere and radiated true appreciation.

The following employees received recognition:

- **Dave Regan** | PEAK Internet; nominated by Trish Ezell
- **Paul LeCroy** | Hunter Communications; nominated by Jim Lamp
- **Susan Allen** | OTA; nominated by Erik Hoefler, Allen Baxter & Marilyn Kendall (SCTC)

Trish has this to say about Dave: “he has risen to the challenge of keeping different areas and people working together in a forward motion to address safety in each

He specializes safety training for each different department, including IT security training. It is with appreciation, I see him (Dave) thinking through each obstacle or regulation with an analytical approach; he couples this with a humble demeanor that fills his coworkers with trust and a willingness to go the extra mile for safety... He has embraced the value and knowledgeable support at Unitel, giving them a space to share resources that help us create a company that keeps its employees and the community safe.”

Jim reports this about Paul, “Paul has been instrumental in improving our safety program... spending countless hours becoming certified to train and implement flagging, CPR and entry level driver training, as well as forklift and bucket truck certification courses to ensure the safety of our crews. He also created a standards and practices manual for apprentices and sub-contractors. His actions have resulted in a 40% reduction in workers comp claims and month over month decreases in safety incidents. His dedication to his team and pride in providing instruction has made him the go-to safety guy for all our locations. Our company values doing the right thing and going the extra mile, so when it comes to workplace safety, Paul lives by these values and personifies workplace safety every day.”

The recipient of the 2022 Ray Hawkins Safety Award was chosen by the OTA Safety Committee and awarded to Susan Allen, retired superstar from OTA. Her friends at SCTC said this: “We believe the safety seminar and this award would no longer exist if not for the work and dedication that Susan put in to keep this seminar/meeting going. Each year with fewer attendees, she continued to work tirelessly and pushed for meaningful content where we could gather and share our experiences regarding safety in the workplace, considering it is more of a priority now in each organization because of the focus highlighted in seminars like this!”



Happenings >>>

Event Recaps

> The CO-IT Committee held its annual seminar in Newport in September. Session topics ranged from FCC updates and robocall mitigation from Ward Consulting, a gregarious panel discussion on internal communication for company cohesion, expanding fiber footprints by expanding 1G broadband presented by John Seaman/Canbium Networks, DC Power System Maintenance discussed by Curtis Ashton from American Power Systems and an eye-opening session led by Matt Marheine, from Oregon Emergency Management.

> The Safety Committee held its annual seminar in Lebanon in November. The session topics included a presentation by Craig Rapp on situational awareness and active shooter scenarios, HR expert, Sharon Jutila discussed the work place and mental health, Benton County Emergency Manager, Bryan Lee spoke about the Cascadia Subduction Zone and how as an employee and personally each of us can be prepared for widespread emergencies to be a part of the solution and less part of the disaster and Committee Chair, Dave Lindsey presented on rigging and included a brief knot tying demo!

Reminders

- > Membership dues are DUE! Have you sent in your payment, yet?
- > The OTA Scholarship application is now LIVE and we are open for submissions! [See it, here!](#) Please spread the word – the deadline for applicants is Friday, March 30.

Save the Dates

- > **2023 ITA Showcase:**
 - Holiday Inn, Columbia Riverfront
 - March 7-9
- > **2023 Outside Plant Seminar: Register Now!**
 - Best Western, Newport
 - April 6-7
- > **2023 Annual Meeting:**
 - The Riverhouse Inn, Bend
 - June 5-6
- > **2023 Low Voltage Continuing Ed Classes:**
 - TBD for May (Choice between (2) one day sessions)

Governance >>>

Officers & Board of Directors

- Geri Fraijo, **President** (Monitor Cooperative Telephone)
- Jessica Epley, **Vice-President** (ZiPLY Fiber)
- Paul Hauer, **Secretary** (Beaver Creek Cooperative Telephone)
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