

INSIGHT INTO YOUR TELECOM AND BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

Legislative Session Winds Up

On the legislative front, the 2023 Regular Session of the Legislature ended on Sunday, June 25. While most of the bills on the OTA tracking service wound up not having major impacts on our members, there were a few that did. Most of that information will be discussed in our Legislative Committee, however there are two bills that need to be called out in this newsletter.

The first is Senate Bill 635. If passed this bill would have allowed counties in Oregon to begin assessing permit fees for work along county roads. The OTA took the lead in the effort to ensure this bill did not get a hearing. While we were successful, there was a trade-off. That trade-off was agreeing to meet with the counties during the interim between legislative sessions. The purpose of the meetings will be to determine if there is any way the counties can address their concerns and the concerns of utilities. Ideally, the counties would come away from these meetings with the ability to craft a bill that utilities would be neutral on.

To be clear, the OTA will not ever support legislation that would potentially impose a new fee on our members. However, if the counties can address issues such as making any permit fee process statewide and not county by county, ensuring fees do not apply to emergency repair work, etc. then it becomes more difficult for the OTA to oppose their effort.

The second to note is House Bill 2757. This bill passed over our objections and a new 9-8-8 fee will now be imposed on our customers. The fee is 40 cents per line (including VoIP) or handset. This bill was a priority of both the Governor and the House Speaker, making it very difficult to knock it off track though it was definitely possible. There were a couple of issues working against the OTA effort with this bill.

First and foremost, our friends on the wireless and cable side did not have the same enthusiasm for opposing HB 2757 as we did. I'm not gonna try and psycho-analyze their reasons (emphasis on psycho), suffice it to say this made the task that much more difficult. Point in case, the OTA was the only entity that testified against the bill every time the opportunity was allowed. Legislators know when the industry is split on an issue and believe me, they take advantage. Why wouldn't they?

Second and even more dispiriting, the deal struck to get Senate Republicans back to the Capitol included Republicans providing the votes needed to get the bill across the line... which is exactly what happened. Just enough Republicans in the House and Senate voted yes to impose this new tax on Oregonians.

The bottom line on HB 2757 is that the OTA made a few enemies opposing the bill. Even knowing what we know, the OTA would still have to oppose this bill as best we could, at least I think we should.

-Brant Wolf



LEFT: **Jim Rennard** and **Brad Madison** from Pioneer Connect give Senator Anderson a tour of their facility.
 RIGHT: **Jeff Smith**, VPS, **Janet Bailey**, DirectLink/CBS, **Senator Ron Wyden**, **Brant Wolf**, OTA and **Jim Rennard**, Pioneer Connect meet in the Senator's office.

2023 Outside Plant Seminar

In April, the Outside Plant Committee held its annual two day seminar in Newport at the Best Western Agate Beach Inn. With almost 100 OSP employees, associate members/exhibitors and speakers, the event was a success! Topics for sessions included new wifi technology and trends, PON troubleshooting and fiber optic tech and trends presented by Larry Johnson from FiberStory, 811 Updates and Oregon Dig Laws, physical layer testing, wildfire mitigation strategies, copper cable fault locating, Cascadia subduction zone and emergency management, plus legislative and regulatory updates from Brant Wolf.

The Committee received five fantastic nominations for the annual outside plant employee of the year. The following employees received special recognition:

- **Brian Bellikka** | Clear Creek Communications nominated by Jay Henke
- **Evan Cochran** | Warm Springs Telecom nominated by Tim York
- **Ray Cruz** | MINET nominated by PJ Armstrong
- **Vince Emge** | Pioneer Connect nominated by Rick Peterson
- **Levi Temperly** | Emerald Broadband nominated by Holli Eckstine

Jay has this to say about Brian, "with over 20 years in the telecom industry, he has become well versed and extremely detailed. He is always willing to step in to lead the crew and get services restored - no matter the problem and always brings a sense of calm to the situation."



Tim noted this in his nomination of Evan, "Evan was hired on for his attitude. Not having a lot of technical experience, he was a sponge - trying to learn everything as fast as he could and asked lots of questions. He jumps on the chance to learn, is the first to volunteer to take out the snowmobiles at midnight to remote tower locations during the winter to clear solar panels and restart the generators so customers have service. When supply chain issues caused a delay in specific routers needed for customers, Evan even took his own personal router to a health challenged customer's home to install because he knew how much they needed service -despite his own family going without until the new shipment would come in!"

PJ reported that Ray is a natural leader for MINET who cared greatly about the team he is responsible for. He arrives early and stays late to make sure jobs get done, no matter what. He is reliable and always looking for ways to make operational improvements, including developing a formal/proper construction team (a first in MINET history), learning and teaching others a new ticketing system and improving his mapping and network design skills - from all of these things he has truly developed into a great team leader.

Holli noted that Levi has grown into lead fiberman from only having previous construction experience when he first joined the company! He is kind, professional and is a great teacher. He takes the time to train even the admin staff (with the upmost patience) on what Emerald Broadband calls "ground grunt" so that even those front-end employees know exactly what the fiber men are doing out there. Levi is creative and intuitive and finds ways to overcome obstacles.

The recipient of the 2023 Outside Employee of the Year chosen by the OTA Outside Plant Committee and awarded to Vince Emge from Pioneer Connect. Rick stated that though his 35 years of working with Vince in various capacities, he has known him to be quite "the creative problem solver, a steadfast customer advocate and champion for the company he works for. Vince is a forward thinker, a hands on manager and leads by example. He supports his team and co-workers and would literally give the shirt off his back (unless it was his favorite In-N-Out Burger shirt!) to any of them. His compassion and generosity is outstanding and his sense of humor is an understatement!"

2023 NECA Continuing Education Courses

In May, the OTA coordinated two NEC continuing education courses for those employees that hold the low voltage electrical licenses in effort to ease the renewal burden! SCTC and Monitor Cooperative Telephone hosted the groups. In all, thirty employees received the required number of CE hours for the October renewal! Please remember that the NEC CE courses that we facilitate only occur every years. if you have employees that are in need of a new license (but have been employed for a number of years by your company), please reach out to see if we can help fastrack the licensing process.

That's a Wrap: Annual Conference

The Annual Conference was held June 5 & 6 in Bend at the Riverhouse on the Deschutes. We welcomed nearly 150 folks from our service provider companies, (including board members, management and operational employees), associate members and exhibitors! Under clear blue skies, attendees golfed at the gorgeous Widgi Creek Golf Club while others pedaled around on Bend's Cycle Pub visiting local breweries!

That Monday, the Scholarship Foundation held the annual auction, raffle and dinner to raise funds to support next years' scholarship cycle. The Foundation Board raffled off a new Blackstone grill, a Bend getaway package with a Riverhouse gift certificate and two rounds of golf at Widgi Creek, plus a margarita party cart! Funds raised this year from the auction, raffle and other pledged donations reached \$12,215! Thank you to all of our generous donors (monetary and items for the auction) and to those who partook by buying raffle tickets and bid on silent auction items!

Tuesday's sessions included keynote speaker, LD Bennett who aimed to inspire with her pep talk on resilience and "burning bright" versus "burning out". We also had representatives from NTCA, WTA and the Oregon PUC join us to give industry updates, as well as Pivot Group and Telecompetitor who discussed new telecom tech and trends. We are thankful to our friends at Calix, Positron and Moss Adams who led our afternoon breakout sessions.

Much appreciation to those of you who supported the OTA and attended the Annual Conference! It was a pleasure to have hosted you and we look forward to the next one. We'll be starting the process of vetting locations for 2024 here soon. Want to give feedback for the 2023 Conference? Have suggestions or ideas for our next location? Email Mandy [here!](#)



Thank you Sponsors!





Scholarship Foundation Update

The OTA Scholarship Foundation recently awarded fifteen awards to students across the nation who are related to an employee of our Provider and Associate Members!

Congratulations to the 2023-2024 recipients:

- **Braden Atkins** | Blue Mountain Community College (sponsored by Windwave)
- **Anna Cramer** | Clackamas Community College (sponsored by Molalla Communications)
- **Kadyn Eves** | Pacific University (sponsored by Molalla Communications)
- **Taylor Haring** | South Dakota State University (sponsored by Innovative Systems)
- **Gus Heidegerken** | University of Washington (sponsored by WIN)
- **Cora Heidinger** | Dakota State University (sponsored by Innovative Systems)
- **Payton Hollinger** | Boise State University (sponsored by Core Telecom Systems)
- **Jonathan Kostyuk** | Oregon State University (sponsored by Ziplly Fiber)
- **Matthew Lindemann** | Oregon State University (sponsored by SCTC)
- **Tyler Loecker** | South Dakota State University (sponsored by Innovative Systems)
- **Jessica Mendoza-Reynaga** | Chemeketa Community College (sponsored by Molalla Communications) – **Diana Coleman Memorial Scholarship Award**
- **Jamie Parry** | Utah State University (sponsored by Oregon-Idaho Utilities)
- **Elizabeth Pizzuto** | Chemeketa Community College (sponsored by SCTC)
- **Samantha Shields** | Cal State at Fullerton (sponsored by Consolidated Business Services)
- **Nevaeh Skinner** | Mitchell Technical College (sponsored by Innovative Systems)

UPCOMING EVENT
SAVE THE DATE

Fall 2023 OTA Central Office & IT Seminar
Wednesday & Thursday
November 8 & 9
Best Western Agate Beach Inn | Newport

About our Committees:

We know it takes a village to put action in motion, which is why we love our committees. We have representatives from provider companies, as well as our premier and associate members that help plan and organize our seminars and events. While associate and premier members cannot hold officer positions (chair/vice-chair, etc), they are critical in our structure. Are you interested in representing your company or have an employee that you would like to sit on one of our committees? Reach out to Mandy [here](#) for more information on Committee seats.

Word of the Year: Ambition

Ok, so maybe I am a little too ambitious! I have big ideas, but sometimes those ideas are not feasible with multiple large projects, back-to-back events and limited time!

With that being said, the “monthly” newsletter will move back to quarterly and we can send out special editions, if we have a need to. I truly appreciate your patience while I continue to learn about this position and some of the constraints to work around!

- Mandy

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Geri Fraijo, **President** (Monitor Cooperative Telephone)

Jessica Epley, **Vice-President** (Zipty Fiber)

Paul Hauer, **Secretary** (Beaver Creek Cooperative Telephone)

Garrin Bott, Director (Rally Networks)

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James Rennard, Director (Pioneer Connect)

Jared Wiener, Director (Lumen Technologies)

Renee Willer, Director (DataVision)

Brooke Wheeler, Director (Cascade Utilities|Reliance Connects)

Shaun Plummer, Associate Member Delegate, Core Telecom

In recognition of our **Premier Associate Members** who pledge a higher level of support to the OTA. Thank you!

- Aldrich CPAs + Advisors, LLP
- Consolidated Business Services
- General Pacific, Inc.
- JSI
- Millenium
- Moss Adams, LLP
- North Sky Communications
- Radisys
- Robinson Brothers Construction, Inc.
- Telecom Insurance Group
- Unitel Insurance

Welcome new 2023 OTA Members!

- Atkore
- AtlanticVision
- Computer Technology, Inc
- Extreme Excavating Company
- Hefflin Mechanical
- JJ Kane Auctioneers
- KLJ Engineering
- LightRiver Technologies
- Prysmian Group - North America
- Rally Factory Rep Services
- Sinch
- SpeedCom Training LLC
- United Tel Supply Inc

