

10. POLICY POSITION

SUPPORTING AN EDUCATION SATELLITE FOR THE UNITED STATES

Background

An emerging United States economy built around information and technology demands that states deliver quality education to every corner of our nation to teach our children and retrain our workers. Our commitment to the future requires that we provide access to quality education available in all communities to all persons, regardless of ability to pay.

Telecommunications can provide universal access to education for children and adults. Many states and the federal government have made huge investments in technologies that deliver televised instructional programs. Although land based technologies are essential to complete communications networks, at the present time, only satellites can distribute educational programs simultaneously to every part of the nation. Currently, all major programming initiatives are satellite based because satellites are the best vehicle for the distribution of educational programming designed to serve large populations at a low unit cost. However, the demand for satellite time already exceeds the supply. Schools and colleges are competing with other users and the problem will become more severe over the next decade.

Recommendation

As Congress considers methods for redirecting and converting science and technology resources from the Department of Defense and central intelligence communities, the Southern Legislative Conference petitions the federal government to provide a federally funded public domain satellite dedicated to providing free transponder capability to every educational institution in the United States. This action by the federal government could make possible the equitable distribution of programs at every school, college, and workplace in the nation. To utilize limited resources for the education of our workforce and citizens is the best defense for our nation and will ensure our ability to compete in the international economy.

Furthermore, we support an interstate arrangement for managing the use of the satellite. This effort would be a tangible way for the federal government and states to help schools, colleges, and businesses use technology to deliver education to all youth and adults in the nation.

Adopted by the Southern Legislative Conference
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