



January 2025

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INSIGHT INTO **YOUR** BROADBAND ASSOCIATION

Preparing for the 2025 Legislative Session: Addressing Fees, Joint Use Challenges and a Call for Committee Volunteers

The 2025 legislative session is officially upon us. In prior newsletters and at our meetings, we have previously discussed some of the issues that we know we will be facing in the new year, such as: **1. The Oregon Department of State Lands seeking authority to levy easement fees and expand their ability to assess permit fees; 2. The Oregon PUC seeking to purchase a new Lifeline database; and 3. Legislation in regards to the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP).**

In addition, the Oregon Broadband Association (OBA) will also make an attempt to address a couple of other items:

- **Local government taxes and fees.** Certain municipalities have been implementing new fees that seem to skirt the “don’t tax the internet” theme. While these new fees may be legal, they also might violate the *spirit* of the law, if not the letter of the law. It will take a change in the Oregon statute to rectify this situation and we will see this up in 2025.
- **Joint use issues.** As more and more funding begins to flow to broadband deployment projects, joint use issues continue to be a hindrance in some cases. The Association has heard from some of our members experiencing delays and added costs and this must be addressed. We anticipate affected parties interested in resolving these issues to gather and meet to try and resolve them without legislative action. However, if this group cannot make progress then again, legislative action will become necessary.

Beyond that, our internal Legislative Committee will start meeting in the weeks after session begins. We have recently lost a couple of committee members, so if you are interested in participating, please reach out to me. This committee helps to review bills that get flagged for review. Participating doesn’t mean you will be required to read tons of legislation; the meetings generally involve discussing the issues at a high level. When needed, OBA’s legal counsel will review for certainty about the positions we take as a community. Join our efforts!

Setbacks, Collective Action and a Path Forward with the Federal & State Universal Service Funds

Recently, the Federal Universal Service Fund (FUSF) has suffered a legal setback. Recent judicial action indicates that the method the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) uses to administer the FUSF may be unconstitutional. In November, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear arguments regarding this matter.

The OBA participates in a group called the National Council of State Telecommunications Association Executives (NCSTAE). The group is comprised of state associations. NCSTAE met and collectively agreed to file an Amicus Curiae brief at the Supreme Court regarding this matter. A reputable firm was identified and all 31 participating states committed to support the effort with a \$5,000.00 contribution. The OBA Board of Directors was in favor of supporting this effort.

The FUSF is vitally important to a large number of our members. Absent the support of the FUSF, many members would have no choice but to halt the continued deployment and maintenance of their rural networks, implement price hikes that would render service unaffordable or some combination of the two. Participating through NCSTAE is a great example of the power of a collective voice such as the OBA.

While we won’t know the outcome of the Supreme Court action for some time, the Association will remain committed to ensuring that universal service support, at the national and state level, continues.

Speaking of USF support, the Oregon USF balance is on a downward trajectory that, absent legislative action, will continue and worsen. The contribution methodology simply has to change at some point to accurately reflect the network that the fund supports. Continuing to assess the Oregon USF on voice services only is no longer appropriate or sustainable. The OBA must decide when and how to address this situation. The process for changing the contribution methodology should begin as soon as possible, since any change could take years to accomplish and will likely be difficult. Let’s get this started!

-Brant Wolf

HAPPENINGS >>>

Event Recaps

2024 Central Office & Information Technology Seminar

In November, the Central Office and Information Technology Committee hosted the annual CO-IT Seminar in the scenic town of Hood River. This year's program featured an impressive lineup of topics that are crucial to the evolving landscape of technology. Attendees had the opportunity to delve into important subjects like **Cloud Switching, Cyber Security and Breaches, and the transition to IPv6.**

Additionally, the seminar explored the transformative Power of AI and discussed the Benefits of Smart Address Installs, which are increasingly relevant in our connected world. One of the sessions featured a comprehensive examination of Emergency Preparedness, presented by representatives from Oregon Emergency Management, emphasizing the importance of readiness in today's unpredictable environment. Cascadia, anyone?!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our attendees, speakers, sponsors and vendors who contributed to the success of this seminar. Your engagement and insight fostered a collaborative atmosphere that enriched the experience for everyone involved. A special thanks goes out to the Committee for their hard work and dedication in organizing this event. We look forward to continuing these important discussions and building on the success of this year's seminar next November. **Join us again in the fall on November 13 & 14!**



21st Annual CO-OP Lunch

On December 11, the Oregon Broadband Association proudly co-hosted the 21st annual CO-OP lunch near the Capitol, marking a significant gathering of our cooperative members from across the state. Out of eleven CO-OP members, eight came together for this special luncheon, which celebrates the cooperative spirit that is vital to the success and resilience of our communities in Oregon. This annual event serves as an important platform for reflecting on the positive impacts that CO-OPs have on local communities, as well as fostering valuable networking opportunities among attendees.

During the luncheon, members had the chance to connect not only with each other but also with key figures in government, including senators, representatives, and congressional staff. This interaction is crucial, as it emphasizes the importance of visibility in advocacy efforts—sometimes, to be seen is to be heard! By attending this event, CO-OP members were able to demonstrate their commitment to community service and cooperative principles.

We extend our gratitude to Beaver Creek Cooperative Telephone, Clear Creek Communications, COLTONTEL, Direct Link, Monitor Cooperative Telephone, Pioneer Connect, SCTC, and SMTA for their participation and for representing both themselves and the broader cooperative movement. Together, we continue to strengthen our voice and impact within the state, celebrating the cooperative values that unite us all.

Save the Dates!

Join Us at the ITA Showcase 2025!



March 11-13

Holiday Inn - Columbia Riverfront in Portland

Why Attend ITA Showcase?

Explore 90+ exhibitors offering innovative solutions. Network with peers and industry leaders. Attend educational seminars and workshops on Workforce Development, Cybersecurity, The Future of Construction Management, and updates on Broadband Funding delivered by the Oregon Broadband Office.

Special Highlights:

Engaging panels and seminars with industry experts. Top Golf for networking and fun!

High Level Schedule of Events:

Top Golf Tuesday Evening
Seminars, Exhibition & Reception on Wednesday
Seminars & Exhibition half day on Thursday

[Register Now](#)



Questions on the Event? Contact: info@itashowcase.com




2025 Outside Plant Seminar

Topics in the works include: Fiber Cleaning/Scoping, Splicing, Safety & Situational Awareness, Microtrenching, MDU Installs, Emergency Preparedness and more!

May 15-16, 2025*
Best Western | Hood River Inn

*Plan your arrival for Wednesday, May 14; our seminar will start early on Thursday morning!




2025 Annual Conference

- +Networking Group Activity
- +Meeting of Members
- +Scholarship Auction
- +Banquet
- +Educational Sessions

June 3-4, 2025*
Salishan Coastal Lodge
Gleneden Beach, OR

*Plan your arrival for Monday, June 2; our group activity will start early on Tuesday morning!




2025 Central Office & Information Technologies Seminar

November 13-14, 2025*
Best Western | Hood River Inn

*Plan your arrival for Wednesday, November 12; our seminar will start early on Thursday morning!

HAPPENINGS >>>

Scholarship Foundation Update & 2025 Application, Other News

Scholarship Foundation Update & 2025 Application

The Oregon Telecommunications Association Scholarship Foundation has officially undergone a name change, reflecting the recent rebranding of the association itself. **Following a vote by the Foundation Board in September, the paperwork has been submitted to the Oregon Secretary of State and we are proud to announce that we are now known as the Oregon Broadband Association Scholarship Foundation!** This change aligns us with the new identity of the Oregon Broadband Association while we maintain our commitment to supporting our members through scholarship funds. Our dedicated Board of Directors remains the same, ensuring that we continue to provide valuable resources to our members.

We are also thrilled to inform you that the Foundation Board of Directors has finalized the 2025 Scholarship Application, which is now available for download on the old OTA website, located at <https://www.ota-telecom.org/membership/scholarship-foundation/>

We encourage all interested applicants to submit their applications by the deadline of Monday, March 31. Your support in sharing this information with your staff is greatly appreciated, as we strive to assist deserving individuals in our network. If you are passionate about philanthropy and interested in contributing further, we invite you to consider serving on the Foundation Board or assisting in other capacities, like during the annual auction or raffle. Your involvement can make a significant difference. For more information or to express your interest, please email Mandy! Thank you for your continued support in empowering education within our community.



2025 Membership Dues & Association Management (AMS) Software

We are still testing new ways to manage our annual membership renewal process! In mid-December, we physically mailed renewal packets to our current 29 Service Provider members. Don't forget that only 13% of your dues payments are not tax deductible. So, talk to your CPA about that other 87%! **Please return your dues payment by February 17!**

For Premier and Associate Members, we are collecting information and intent for renewal via digital form again this year. Company reps and event coordinators should have received an email the third week in December. Once we receive your response, we will manually process the renewal and create an invoice that will be emailed to you from Quickbooks. As always, invoices may be paid by check or card, though please note plastic payments will include a 3% processing fee. This is your reminder to renew and send over a payment by the end of January to be included in the first draft of the Directory. Otherwise, updates are done as time/workflow allows. Didn't see your renewal email? **Jump to the renewal form, [here!](#)**

On a related note, on our ongoing efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our association (like renewals and the directory), we are excited to announce that we are currently in the process of implementing a vital organizational tool through an association management platform. This project is aimed at how we manage our contacts, streamline the annual renewal process, and enhance communication with our members. As we work diligently on this initiative, we anticipate that the completion of the platform will lead to significant improvements in our operational workflows.

We appreciate your patience and support as we embark on this important project, which we believe will ultimately benefit all members of our association. Stay tuned for updates sometime in Q2 as we prepare for launch!

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Officers & Board of Directors

Jessica Epley, **President-Chair** (ZiPLY Fiber)

Paul Hauer, **Vice-Chair (President-Elect)** (Beaver Creek Cooperative Telephone)

Rusti Lattin, **Secretary** (Eagle Telephone Systems, Inc.)

Garrin Bott, Director (Rally Networks)

Geri Fraijo, Director (Monitor Cooperative Telephone)

Erik Hofer, Director (SCTC)

James Rennard, Director (Pioneer Connect)

Jared Wiener, Director (Lumen Technologies)

Brooke Wheeler, Director (Cascade Utilities | Reliance Connects)

Shaun Plummer, Associate Member Delegate (Core Telecom)



Call for Associate Member Board of Director Candidates

We are seeking passionate **associate member** broadband advocates to join our Board of Directors to help shape the organization and bring the voice of this membership tier to the table. The current term is up this June. If you are interested in serving in this capacity, we want to hear from you! [Apply Here!](#)

Heads up, folks! We're busy cooking up a shiny new website, so stay tuned!

Until then, we're still doing our thing at www.ota-telecom.org.

Keep your browsers warm!



Call for OSP Employee of the Year Candidates

Do you know an outstanding outside plant employee who consistently goes above and beyond? Nominate them for the Outside Plant Employee of the Year Award!

This is a chance to recognize those who show exceptional skill, dedication, and hard work in the field. Help us celebrate their contributions to our industry! [Click Here to Nominate!](#)