



January 28, 2020

Dear TSTCI Associate Members,

Here we are in the year 2020 and TSTCI is entering its 68th year of representing and serving the small rural telecommunications industry of Texas. And not unlike the areas our members serve, TSTCI has encountered its fair share of bumpy roads, occasional wrong turns, and even some detours. But like the pioneers of our industry and the pioneers that settled the rural communities, TSTCI is strong in its commitment to you, our members, and we are grateful for your commitment to us. Your continued support strengthens our resolve to continue to be an authentic and reliable association.

Looking forward, we are making some adjustments for the bumps and detours before us. We are making some minor operational changes to further enhance other efficiencies that we have implemented for the Association. One of the new efficiencies is a move to a virtual office operation which allows and affords better flexibility without inhibiting service to members. To assist us in completing this transition, please make note of our changed mailing address: TSTCI, 3112 Windsor Road, Suite A #338, Austin, TX 78703. The office phone number and emails remain the same.

We are also very fortunate to have a leadership team of Officers and Directors that bring a variety of talents, perspectives and leadership gifts. These leaders are your friends, colleagues and clients that are undertaking to serve you with energy, intelligence, imagination and commitment. They are all also committed to working with courtesy, promise and respect for reconciliation within our industry. Our leadership team is: **Mark Washington**, Five Area Telephone Cooperative, Inc.; **Darren Patrick**, Wes-Tex Telephone Cooperative, Inc.; **Ray Bussell**, Alenco Communications, Inc.; **Kelly Allison**, Colorado Valley Telephone Cooperative, Inc.; **Lonnie Rue**, Brazos Telephone Cooperative, Inc.; **Hub Whitton**, Lake Livingston Telephone Company; and, **Wade Maner**, South Plains Telephone Cooperative, Inc.

TSTCI protects, promotes and advocates for our members and associate members following these principles:

- * **Voluntary and Open Membership** - all eligible/willing to accept responsibilities of membership;
- * **Democratic Member Control**- a democratic organization controlled by its membership and managed at the direction of Board of Directors, who set policies and make decisions;
- * **Members' Economic Participation:** Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their cooperative;
- * **Autonomy and Independence:** TSTCI is an autonomous, self-reliant organization controlled by its membership who works with others to achieve its goals;
- * **Education, Training, and Information:** TSTCI provides education and training for its members, elected representatives, managers, employees and the citizens in the communities they serve so they can contribute effectively;
- * **Cooperation among Members:** TSTCI serves its members most effectively and is strengthened by working together; and,
- * **Concern for Community:** TSTCI supports individual companies and the interest of the industry community and the communities our members serve.

TSTCI has done a good job at these core Association missions and will continue to use them as guidelines for all of our interactions – internal or external.

We are 26 small, rural telco members and at last count 118 associate members. We have an excellent reputation at the Texas Capitol and an impressive record of legislative accomplishments and impacts for our members. We are a primary contact for the Public Utility Commission staff (old and new staff) for context, history and education on telecommunications issues, particularly USF issues. We are an active participant in national organizations like NTCA to add statewide flavor to national issues.

We are grateful for you, your support and your continued commitment. With you, we intend to continue to meet and exceed expectations on this forward journey. We will continue to provide you, our associate members, with information, networking opportunities, and participation within the Association. We will also continue our focus on our advocacy program, our regulatory monitoring and our focus on excellent educational programs.

Our four educational meetings for 2020 are:

- **Spring Manager Conference** – June 3-5, 2020 Hotel Galvez, Galveston, TX;
- **Accounting, Marketing & Customer Service** – July 8-10, 2020 The Worthington, Fort Worth, TX;
- **Future's Retreat** – August 5-6, 2020, Inn of the Mountain Gods, Mescalero, NM; (NOTE: this meeting alternates with the Legislative Conference every other year)
- **Annual Membership Meeting** – October 7-9, 2020, Omni Mandalay at Las Colinas, Irving, TX.

Your support of these educational opportunities is greatly appreciated. As always, we appreciate your support in attendance and sponsorship,

Another key area of benefit is our Legislative Advocacy. It is primarily through the work and leadership of members of our legislative team working with other industry participants that successful USF legislation was passed during the legislative sessions of 2011, 2013, 2015, and 2019. For years, the USF Taskforce of TSTCI members and industry experts has helped craft new legislative language and their continued assistance is helping guide regulatory implementation. The USF Taskforce helped formulate the filing criteria working with the PUC staff. These dedicated people put a monumental amount of their time and talents to work on your behalf. The result of their labors are now being seen in the successful and financially reaffirming filings that are being approved by the PUC for additional USF support. TSTCI stands committed to future legislative efforts for its members and associate members and appreciates the input and participation of all in this important element.

What has been reconfirmed these last several months is that TSTCI's values are deeply held beliefs and those beliefs are our motivation and drive and direct our decision-making processes in representation of our membership. They always have been. They always will be.

We greatly appreciate your support, membership and participation in this Association. Weldon and/or any Board member will make themselves available for conversation or questions.

Thank you from the TSTCI Officers, Board & Staff.