

## **Consumer Electronics Association Guiding Policy Principles for the Regulatory Treatment of Voice-over-the Internet Protocol (VoIP)**

Voice-over-the-Internet Protocol (VoIP) is an emerging technology that will revolutionize the way people communicate. CEA strongly believes that this new application, which requires broadband to transmit voice communications using the Internet protocol, will be a key element in driving consumer demand and adoption of broadband. There is a unique synergy between VoIP and broadband that allows each to be used as a purchase incentive for the other. Therefore, VoIP services must not be hampered by burdensome state and federal regulation.

Policy makers are currently grappling with questions surrounding the regulatory treatment of VoIP services. The Federal Communication Commission, United States Congress and state regulators are all examining and debating how to regulate VoIP services. The following are guiding principles policy makers must consider as they work to establish policy solutions. CEA believes these principles provide a strong framework that will allow this nascent technology to flourish, while recognizing and addressing important public interest concerns.

### ***1. Develop a National VoIP Policy***

- VoIP services are interstate services. To avoid a patchwork of state laws and provide regulatory clarity, it is imperative to have a federal nationwide policy covering VoIP services that preempts state action.

### ***2. Limit Regulation of VoIP Services***

- In order for this new technology to advance and penetrate the marketplace, VoIP services must not be shackled by legacy regulations. Such regulation will thwart investment and entry into the marketplace.

### ***3. Develop Solutions to Public Interest Concerns***

- VoIP service providers and policy makers should work together to develop solutions to address important public interest objectives, such as 911, parental control, disability access, law enforcement issues and universal service fund. For those VOIP services where it may be necessary to develop solutions to address these public interest concerns, it will be important to consider and balance the technical capabilities and typical usage of different types of VoIP services, as well as consider new technical solutions to address these issues. Technological mandates from government restrict innovation and should be avoided in favor of industry-developed solutions.

### ***4. Ensure Adequate Consumer Protection***

- As with any other communication service, consumers must be protected from deceptive or misleading marketing practices. Consumers must receive reliable and accurate information to make informed choices when choosing a service provider. However, the advertisers or sellers of such services and related products should not be overburdened with unnecessary regulation.

### ***5. Encourage Industry Solutions***

- If standards are required, they should be voluntary and open. This would enable greater efficiency for the development new technologies, and simplify both consumer education and marketing of new VoIP services.