

August 5, 2008

Ms. Patty Van Gerpen, Executive Director South Dakota Public Utilities Commission 500 East Capitol Ave. State Capitol Building Pierre, SD 57501

RE: Dockets TC008-006 through TC08-027 (In the Matter of the Petitions of LECs, for Suspension or Modification of 47 U.S.C. Section 251(b)(2) of the Communications Act of 1934, as Amended)

Dear Ms. Van Gerpen:

Enclosed for filing in the above referenced dockets is an electronic original of the "Rebuttal Testimony" of SDTA witness, Larry Thompson.

As is evidenced by the Certificate of Service, also provided, service has been made to other parties in these Dockets.

Thank you for your assistance in filing this document.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Coit

SDTA Executive Director and General Counsel

CC: Darla Pollman Rogers

Phillip Schenkenberg

Mary J. Sisak

Talbot Wieczorek

Stephen Rowell

Dennis Duncan

Rolayne Ailts Wiest

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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IN THE MATTER OF THE PETITIONS)	Docket No. TC08-006
FOR SUSPENSION OR MODIFICATION)	Through
OF 47 U.S.C. SECTION 251(b)(2) OF THE)	Docket No. TC08-027
COMMUNICATIONS ACT OF 1934 AS)	
AMENDED)	
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REPLY TESTIMONY OF LARRY D THOMPSON ON BEHALF OF SOUTH DAKOTA TELECOMMUICATIONS ASSOCIATION (SDTA)

1 2	Q1:	Please state your name, employer, business address and telephone number.
3	A1:	My name is Larry Thompson. I am the Chief Executive Officer of Vantage Point
4		Solutions, Inc. ("Vantage Point"). My business address is 2211 North Minnesota
5		Street, Mitchell, South Dakota, 57301.
6 7	Q2:	On whose behalf are you testifying?
8	A2:	I am testifying on behalf of South Dakota Telecommunications Association
9		(SDTA) as an intervening party on behalf of its member companies in Dockets
10		TC08-006 through TC08-027. The SDTA member companies' dockets are as
11		follows:
12		1. TC08-006 - Alliance Communications Cooperative, Inc.(Alliance);
13		Splitrock Properties, Inc.(Splitrock); and Hills Telephone Company (Hills)
14		2. TC08-007 - Kennebec Telephone Company (Kennebec)

1 3. TC08-008 - Faith Municipal Telephone Company (Faith) 2 4. TC08-009 - Western Telephone Company (Western) 3 5. TC08-010 - Sioux Valley Telephone Company (Sioux Valley) 6. TC08-011 - Venture Communications Cooperative (Venture) 4 5 7. TC08-012 - RC Communications, Inc. (RC Communications) 8. TC08-013 - Beresford Municipal Telephone Company (Beresford) 6 7 9. TC08-014 - Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc. (GWTC) 8 10. TC08-015 - Vivian Telephone Company (Vivian) 9 11. TC08-016 - Kadoka Telephone Company (Kadoka) 10 12. TC08-017 - Brookings Municipal Utilities d/b/a Swiftel Communications 11 (Swiftel) 12 13. TC08-018 - Union Telephone Company (Union) 14. TC08-019 - Armour Independent Telephone Company (Armour) 13 14 15. TC08-020 - McCook Cooperative Telephone Company (McCook) and 15 Tri-County Telcom (Tri-County) 16. TC08-021 - Bridgewater-Canistota Independent Telephone Company 16 (Bridgewater) 17 17. TC08-022 - Valley Telecommunications Cooperative Association (Valley) 18 19 18. TC08-023 - Midstate Communications, Inc. (Midstate) 20 19. TC08-024 - Interstate Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc. (ITC) 21 20. TC08-025 - West River Cooperative Telephone Company (West River) 22 21. TC08-026 - Stockholm Strandburg Telephone Company (Stockholm) 23 22. TC08-027 - Santel Communications Cooperative, Inc. (Santel)

1	Q3:	Generally, what types of services does Vantage Point perform?
2	A3:	Vantage Point is a telecommunications engineering and consulting company
4		whose services include long range communication plans and feasibility studies,
5		emerging technology analysis and migration studies, telecommunications
6		electronic equipment engineering, outside plant engineering, field services
7		engineering and regulatory consulting.
8 9	Q4:	What are your duties and responsibilities at Vantage Point?
10	A4:	I am responsible for providing consulting and engineering services to clients in a
11		wide array of technical and regulatory areas associated with telecommunications.
12		Our client base consists of small Independent Telephone Companies such as the
13		members of SDTA. We have more than 80 fulltime employees on staff. I am
14		also responsible for the normal duties you would expect from the chief executive
15		officer for a company of our size.
16 17	Q5:	What is your educational background?
18	A5:	I have a Bachelor of Arts in Physics from William Jewell College in Liberty,
19		Missouri, and both Bachelors and Masters degrees in Electrical and Computer
20		Engineering from the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas.
21	Q6:	Do you hold any professional engineering licenses?
22	A6:	Yes. I am a licensed professional engineer in Colorado, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho,
23		Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, South
24		Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin and Wyoming. I am also a
25		member of the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying
26		(NCEES).

1	Q7:	Do you have a resume of your experience?
2	A7:	Yes, it is attached to my testimony as Exhibit LT-R-1.
3	Q8:	Have you previously filed testimony in this case?
4 5	A8:	No, I have not. But I have testified numerous other times in various proceedings
6		before the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission (SDPUC) and have been
7		involved with Local Number Portability (LNP) since the regulations were first
8		passed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). I am also familiar
9		with the two prior LNP suspension proceedings before the SDPUC.
10	Q9:	What is the purpose of your reply testimony?
11 12	A9:	The purpose of my reply testimony is to provide technical and regulatory facts
13		relating to the Petitions ¹ of the SDTA members referenced above. Specifically, I
14		will comment on the standards applicable to the Commission's review of the
15		above suspension or modification requests, and on issues I believe the
16		Commission should consider in that review.
17 18 19	Q10:	Are you familiar with the issues raised in the pre-filed direct testimony of the SDTA member companies involved in these Petitions?
20	A10:	Yes, I am.
21 22 23	Q11:	Do you have any general comments regarding the direct testimonies before you begin?
24	A11:	Yes, I and SDTA support all of the SDTA Member Petitions for the reasons stated
25		in their direct testimonies that have been filed by the SDTA member companies.
26		More specifically, the high costs of transport for Intermodal LNP (ILNP), the
27		nearly nonexistent demand for ILNP and other challenges that South Dakota

¹ In The Matter of the Petitions For Suspension of Modification of 47 U.S.C. Section 251(b)(2) of the Communications Act of 1934 As Amended (referred to herein as the "Petitions").

1		Rural Local Exchange Carriers (RLEC) face in implementing LNP, especially
2		ILNP, will be addressed in my testimony and supports the previously filed direct
3		testimonies of the SDTA members.
4 5 6 7 8	Q12:	Are there standards in Section 251(f)(2) of the Telecommunications Act of 1934 as amended (the Act) and SDCL 49-31-80 applicable for suspension and modification of ILNP and LNP to VOIP providers (VLNP) that the Commission should consider?
9	A12:	Yes, the Commission must consider whether the suspension or modification of
10		ILNP or VLNP is necessary to avoid a "significant adverse economic impact on
11		users of telecommunications services generally" or "to avoid imposing a
12		requirement that is unduly economically burdensome," and, also, it must consider
13		whether granting the requested suspension or modification would be consistent
14		with the "public interest, convenience and necessity."
15 16 17	Q13:	Why will the implementation of ILNP or VLNP have a significant adverse economic impact on SDTA member end users and why is it "unduly economically burdensome" to SDTA member companies?
16		economic impact on SDTA member end users and why is it "unduly
16 17 18		economic impact on SDTA member end users and why is it "unduly economically burdensome" to SDTA member companies?
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16 17 18 19 20 21		economic impact on SDTA member end users and why is it "unduly economically burdensome" to SDTA member companies? When reviewing the Petitions and considering whether, based on economic impacts, SDTA believes this Commission should consider the economic burden of implementing ILNP and VLNP on all of the RLEC's customers, including the vast majority of RLEC customers who do not want LNP and grant the relief
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16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24		economic impact on SDTA member end users and why is it "unduly economically burdensome" to SDTA member companies? When reviewing the Petitions and considering whether, based on economic impacts, SDTA believes this Commission should consider the economic burden of implementing ILNP and VLNP on all of the RLEC's customers, including the vast majority of RLEC customers who do not want LNP and grant the relief requested by the petitioners. The SDPUC should also weigh and consider the economic burdens of implementation against the expected benefits — considering
16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25		economic impact on SDTA member end users and why is it "unduly economically burdensome" to SDTA member companies? When reviewing the Petitions and considering whether, based on economic impacts, SDTA believes this Commission should consider the economic burden of implementing ILNP and VLNP on all of the RLEC's customers, including the vast majority of RLEC customers who do not want LNP and grant the relief requested by the petitioners. The SDPUC should also weigh and consider the economic burdens of implementation against the expected benefits — considering economic burdens relative to the corresponding consumer benefits. The FCC first

country. Nationally and even more so in South Dakota, there has been minimal, if
any, demand for ILNP. According to a National Telecommunications
Cooperative Associations (NTCA) LNP Demand Survey ² of its members,
approximately 65% of respondents did not have any requests for wireline-to-
wireless porting and an additional 10% only had one such request. Within the
rural areas of South Dakota served by SDTA member companies, the testimony
filed by the RLECs herein indicates no demand or a very minimal demand for
ILNP and, also, VLNP. In addition to this data indicating an almost non-existing
demand for ILNP and VLNP, the RLEC direct testimonies have outlined
significant costs associated with the implementation of LNP. Given the low to
nonexistent demand for the LNP services, and the identified cost of implementing
LNP, the RLECs have sufficiently demonstrated that the economic burden criteria
set forth in the Section 251(f)(2) provisions are met. As I noted earlier, all end
users or consumers of each of the RLECs should be considered and given that the
vast majority of RLEC consumers have no interest in ILNP or VLNP, the
suspensions or modifications requested are warranted to avoid imposing an undue
or unnecessary economic impact on these consumers.
What are the "public interest" issues that should be considered by the Commission in the granting of these Petitions?

Q14:

A14: The provisions of Section 251(f)(2) also mandate as an additional consideration in reviewing the filed Petitions a look at the "public interest, convenience and necessity." In conducting this "public interest review," SDTA would urge the

² National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA) Wireline-to-Wireless Local Number Portability Survey, January 2005.

Commission to carefully consider the universal service impacts that are likely to flow from the imposition of any extraordinary transport obligations on the petitioning RLECs and to also keep in mind the differences between the petitioning RLECs and the non-rural carriers participating in these dockets. Contrary to the impression that is often created by the large wireless carriers, including Alltel Wireless and Verizon Wireless, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 did not have only one goal. While, certainly, bringing increased competition for telecommunications service was a goal of the Act, another important goal evidenced by many different provisions in the Act was to maintain and advance universal service. The U.S. Congress with its passage of the 1996 Act communicated very clearly its desire that increasing competition should not come at the expense of universal service. New provisions related to the federal universal service fund mechanisms were made part of the Act and in addition various provisions were included in the Act to recognize the unique status of and special universal service concerns faced by rural telephone companies. Various "rural safeguard" provisions were adopted as part of the 1996 Act, including the provisions of 47 U.S.C. § 251(f)(2), and all of these provisions are focused around addressing legitimate universal service concerns that are presented in rural areas.

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Q.15: Do you believe that the positions of the wireless carriers participating in these dockets, related to transport obligation or cost issues, fairly take into account universal service concerns?

A.15: No, I do not. It is apparent to me that large wireless carriers, including Alltel Wireless and Verizon Wireless, believe simply that rural carriers should be treated exactly as any larger telecommunications carrier and they appear to take the

position that they should be able to insist on a particular point of interconnection regardless of the extent of the RLEC network or scope of the RLEC's service area. SDTA disagrees with this position and believes instead that the obligation to originate and deliver local traffic to other competitive carriers is not without limits. These limits are first clearly established by Section 251(c)(2) of the Act which states that ILECs only have the "duty to provide, for the facilities and equipment of any requesting telecommunications carrier, interconnection with the local exchange carrier's network for the transmission and routing of telephone exchange service and exchange access at any technical feasible point within the carrier's network" (emphasis added). Also, in the FCC's rules, Section 51.305³, it states "An incumbent LEC shall provide, for the facilities and equipment of any requesting telecommunications carrier, interconnection with the incumbent LECs network...at any technically feasible point within the incumbent LEC's network...". Interconnection needs only to be provided, per this same FCC rule, "at a level of quality that is equal to that which the incumbent LEC provides itself, a subsidiary, an affiliate, or any other party." Furthermore, it must be remembered that rural telephone companies hold a "rural interconnection exemption" under Section 251(f)(1)(a) of the Act and pursuant to this exemption most rural carriers are not subject to the interconnection requirements or obligations found in 47 U.S.C. § Section 251(c). This exemption would certainly appear to have some affect on the location or point of interconnection to be established between carriers wanting to exchange

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³ 47 U.S.C. §51(305)(a).

telecommunications traffic in as much as it exempts rural telephone companies specifically from having to interconnect "at any technically feasible point." Based on the rural interconnection exemption language, SDTA believes that its member companies, as exempt rural telephone companies, do not have the same obligations with respect to "points of interconnection" than would other larger non-rural carriers. Moreover, this Commission has the authority to further limit the originating transport obligations of small rural carriers through suspension and/or

modification proceedings presented under Section 251(f)(2).

0.16: Do you believe this Commission should take into account in these proceedings all of the possible negative consequences of requiring rural telephone companies to carry local traffic outside of their rural service areas?

A.16: Yes, I do. Although with regard to ILNP implementation specifically, the only traffic in contention is the wireline originated traffic to ported locally rated wireless numbers, SDTA believes it is appropriate for this Commission, under the public interest criteria set forth in Section 251(f)(2), to consider the broader, longer term consequences of imposing extraordinary transport responsibilities on small rural carriers. South Dakota is the 17th biggest state in the USA, with 77,121 square miles and has a population of only the 46th in the USA at only 754,844 people. You can fit many other states inside South Dakota that are more heavily populated. Exhibit LT-R-2 illustrates the size of South Dakota compared to a few other states. The cost of transport in South Dakota at a distant POI would be far greater when in comparison to a smaller state. Effectively, the carriers

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⁴ US Census Bureau, United States Census 2000.

seeking interconnection that are attempting to impose greater originating transport obligations on rural carriers (without regard to the actual network or service areas of the RLEC) are asking this Commission to shift transport costs brought on by their networking decisions to the RLEC end users. As this Commission is well aware, the challenges of preserving universal service in high cost areas are already substantial and should not be made more difficult by imposing excessive obligations on RLECs related to the delivery of local telecommunications traffic. Presently, all of the rural RLECs continue to invest heavily in network facility upgrades to advance the level of broadband services available in their service areas so the costs of serving the high cost rural areas in South Dakota are increasing, not decreasing. And, furthermore, as this Commission is well aware, there is substantial uncertainty surrounding the federal universal service mechanisms and also the entire system of inter-carrier compensation payments established by the federal and state jurisdictions. It is also significant that currently no explicit state universal service funding mechanism exists to provide assistance in offsetting the higher costs and keeping retail rates affordable in rural areas of South Dakota (if the federal reform proceedings related to the federal USF and inter-carrier compensation result in substantial negative impacts on rural carriers). Under these circumstances, I do not believe this Commission should impose any new, extraordinary transport obligations on South Dakota's rural telephone companies. Shifting additional costs to RLEC end users for the purpose of

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transporting local calls to locations far removed from the existing rural service areas would be contrary to good universal service policy.

Q.17: Do you agree that the impacts of the Commission denying the requested suspensions and/or modifications in these LNP dockets would be minimal?

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A.17: No, absolutely not. The carriers that push for RLECs to carry local traffic beyond their service areas have suggested repeatedly in various proceedings that such an obligation would only have minimal impacts. These arguments, however, never seem to consider the originating transport issue in a broader context with an eye as to how decisions on the issue could affect later cases involving similar, but not identical traffic. In this case, we are dealing most directly with the routing and delivery of local wireline-to-wireless telecommunications traffic that is destined specifically to local numbers that are ported from a wireline to wireless phone. It also, however, is reasonable to expect that wireless carriers will insist that RLECs incur the obligation to deliver all wireline-to-wireless traffic to local NXXs or all wireline originated IntraMTA telecommunications traffic to the same point of interconnection that is established, or some similar point that is established outside of the RLEC service area. Further, it is probably reasonable to expect that carriers or service providers interested in providing wireline VOIP services will make similar claims with respect to RLEC transport obligations. This, in fact, already appears to be occurring in Dockets TC06-176 and TC07-007 pending before this Commission⁵. A further probably result will be claims on the part of

⁵ See TC06-176 (In the Matter of the Petition of Sprint Communications Company L.P. for Arbitration Pursuant to the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to Resolve Issues Relating to an Interconnection Agreement with Brookings Municipal Utilities d/b/a Swiftel Communications) and TC07-007 (In the Matter of the Petition of Brookings Municipal Utilities d/b/a Swiftel Communications for Suspension or

certain interconnecting carriers for RLECs to deliver both local and toll
telecommunications traffic to the same point of interconnection established
outside the RLEC service area, and possibly over the same trunk facilities.
Claims for the establishment of "mixed use," or multi-jurisdictional facilities have
also already been presented to this Commission in Dockets TC06-176 and TC07-
007.
When reviewing the Petitions filed in these proceedings and considering the
transport obligation concerns that are presented, the Commission should keep in
mind these other claims that either have already been raised or which are likely to
be raised in other proceedings. If carriers seeking interconnection services are
able to impose these sorts of extraordinary transport obligations on RLECs there
will be substantial and wide ranging negative impacts on rural carriers and
consumers.
In addition to the negative impacts of transport costs, there are potentially many
other issues to consider if the Commission decides to not grant this Petition. If
the RLEC is forced to transport local traffic to another carrier at a point beyond
the RLECs network, it is possible and maybe even likely that other carriers would
want similar treatment. As an example, if every RLEC was forced to provide
transport at their own expense to a POI outside of their service area for any
CMRS carrier, the RLEC may be required to provide free transport to other
carriers including interexchange carriers (IXCs) that currently have to pay to use

Modification of Dialing Parity, Number Portability and Reciprocal Compensation Obligations, Docket No. TC07-007).

that same route for access traffic. The RLEC would likely have to recover the

	costs of this transport through either additional End Oser charges of through
	charges that would be passed on to other carriers that pay for transport services.
	With fewer carriers paying their fair share of the transport network, the cost of
	transport to the remaining carriers would likely increase dramatically and
	resulting in some carriers paying a disproportionate share of the network.
	Implementation of ILNP could result in costs that are higher and could be
	substantially higher than the costs calculated by many of the SDTA members.
	For example if the landline customer ports to Verizon Wireless, then this same
	customer ports to Alltel Wireless and then to T-Mobile, the RLEC would need to
	have circuits with each of these wireless carrier for proper routing of the call.
	Absent these circuits, the RLEC may be forced to deliver these calls to an IXC for
	deliver y to a wireless customer. This would likely result in additional End User
	charges and customer confusion.
Q18:	Are there any other reasons you believe this Commission should grant the requested suspensions and/or modifications?
A18:	Yes, the issue of who is responsible for transport outside a LEC service area for
	ILEC to CMRS traffic is still pending before the FCC and FCC guidance is long
	overdue. The 8th Circuit Court framed this issue well when it stated "that if and
	when the FCC rules, we may be required to revisit the issue. At such time we
	would be armed with better arguments and a better understanding of the issue
	based upon the FCC's expertise."6 The Court left the door open and there
	continues to be uncertainly on this issue with the lack of guidance by the FCC.
	Under these circumstances and until the FCC rules further, it would be

⁶ *Id*, at page 18.

appropriate for the SDPUC to review and modify or eliminate any transport cost
of ILNP or VLNP outside the RLEC service areas. The transport of RLEC to
CMRS/VOIP traffic is a costly issue for the RLECs in implanting ILNP and
VLNP requests. The SDPUC should not shift that cost onto the RLECsor their
customers. The more ports that take place, the more the cost would be driven up
for the RLECs and their customers that have not ported. This results in a situation
where the "cost causer" is not the "cost payer". Granting the petitions would
be consistent with the Commission's previous suspensions which recognized the
high transport costs of the RLECs and their customers and the unresolved
apportionment of transport obligations by the FCC. The Commission can
preserve the status quo and wait for the FCC to rule on the issue.
It should also be noted that the National Telecommunications Cooperative
Association (NTCA) has filed a federal court appeal with the D.C. Circuit Court
of Appeals from the FCC's Order on Remand (FCC07-188) entered In the Matter
of Telephone Number Portability (FCC Docket No. WC07-243) on November 8,
2007.7 NTCA specifically is challenging the validity of the FCC's Order on
grounds that the FCC did not properly consider the economic impacts to "small
entities" as it is required to do under the federal "Regulatory Flexibility Act."

Q.19: Does that conclude your reply testimony?

A19: Yes. However, I wish to reserve the opportunity to supplement this testimony in the future, if necessary.

⁷ NTCA v. FCC and U.S.A., Case no. 08-1071 (U.S. court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit).

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned, attorney for SDTA, hereby certifies that a true and correct Rebuttal Testimony of SDTA witness, Larry Thompson, as filed in SDPUC Dockets TC08-006 through TC08-027, was served electronically on this 5th day of August, 2008, upon:

Ms. Darla Pollman Rogers Attorney At Law Riter Rogers Wattier & Northrup PO Box 280 Pierre, SD 57501

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Mr. Stephen B. Rowell Alltel PO Box 2177 Little Rock, AR 72202

Dated this 5th day of August, 2008.

Richard D. Coit, General Counsel South Dakota Telecommunications Association PO Box 57 – 320 East Capitol Avenue Pierre, SD 57501-0057

Exhibit LT-R-1

Résumé

Of Larry D. Thompson

Currently

 I am a registered professional engineer in 17 states and Chief Executive Officer of Vantage Point Solutions.

Education

- Bachelor of Arts degree in Physics from William Jewell College (1983)
- Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Kansas (1985)
- Master of Science degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the University of Kansas (1986)

Employment History

- 1985-1991: Satellite Systems Engineer TRW, Inc (Redondo Beach, CA)
 - o Designed communication payloads of satellite systems.
- 1991-1996: Senior Engineer CyberLink Corporation (Boulder, CO)
 - Communications consulting in a small telecommunications consulting firm.
- 1996-2000: Senior Engineer Martin and Associates, Inc. (Mitchell, SD)
 - o Provided engineering and consulting services to Rural LECs.
- 2000-2002: General Manager of TCE Martin Group, Inc. (Mitchell, SD)
 - Managed a growing department of approximately 100 engineers and consultants
- 2002-Present: CEO Vantage Point Solutions, Inc. (Mitchell, SD)
 - Provide engineering, consulting, and regulatory services to rural LECs in South Dakota and elsewhere.

Industry Activities

- Participated in Senate and FCC panels
- Participated on various NECA Task Forces
- Frequent speaker at state and national conferences
- Speaker at various FCC and US Senate events
- Associate Member of NECA Rate Development Task Force
- Published in various industry magazines and trade journals

