



The Institute for Policy Innovation

Fourth Annual Communications Summit Event Recap



IPI's Fourth Annual Communications Summit was held in Washington DC, February 29, 2012. The program brought together top policy makers, industry insiders and thought leaders representing a diverse range of views to discuss the future of and current issues facing wireless and broadband.

[Click on the link to read the transcript or watch the video of each panel.](#)



◀ In his opening keynote address, CTIA President Steve Largent discussed how the wireless industry's success over the years is thanks to light-touch regulation, garnering smiles from around the room by holding up pioneering wireless devices, such as the classic "bag phone" as well as the "brick phone" of the early 1990s.

Largent explained how wireless has become an integral part of education, mHealth, energy, agriculture, transportation and more, and pressed the need for more spectrum, the fuel to meet consumer demand for wireless innovation. Competition in the industry is needed to keep up with innovation and usage levels, meet consumer needs and

for the country to remain a global wireless leader, he said.

Largent urged Congress to pass more deregulation legislation that could help the wireless industry through tax reform.



In a panel discussing communications innovation and economic growth,

◀ Progressive Policy Institute chief economic strategist Michael Mandel noted that communications has been able to resist the downward pull of today's economy. "For the first time, the communications sector is driving the macroeconomy," he said. Mandel also pointed out that leading economic trends "during a recession tend to be the biggest drivers of expansion during economic resurgence."

▶ Panelist Kevin Hassett of the American Enterprise Institute discussed his recent study illustrating the impact of wireless technology diffusion on the creation of more than 1.5 million jobs from 2007 to 2011. These advances create two effects: The "Angry Birds Effect," referring to the boost in developers of software programs, and the "Angry Boss Effect," referencing the ability of companies to keep in constant communication with employees, thereby increasing productivity, profits, growth and jobs.





▲The biggest problem with spectrum allocation is that it's case by case, said Tom Hazlett, a George Mason University professor of law and economics: "We need a cohesive view and not an ad hoc approach to spectrum policy," he said.

A panel of industry insiders shared their insights on the current state of the "spectrum crunch."
▶Charla Rath, Vice President of Policy Development at Verizon Wireless, said Congress should focus on how to get a continuous supply. "One of the key places to look is government spectrum, and I think in a way that is our next big legislative push."



◀Mark Stachiw, general counsel and vice chairman for MetroPCS, noted that, while his company applauds Congress for recently passed spectrum legislation, carriers need even more spectrum, the "lifblood" of the wireless industry.



▶In a keynote address, Dan Burton of Salesforce.com explained how social media has made a huge impact on current events and government. In the past year alone, powerful movements, including Occupy, the Arab Spring, and even bank fee and Netflix subscription rate revolts, all started with a social media interface.

"Social networking has even surpassed email usage," said Burton. The next decade is about social media, he said. "The public debate about cloud computing is over. Everyone agrees that the government has to go to the cloud." Burton said his priority is to get government agencies to embrace these new social and cloud technologies. "Government must get on the cloud, because that changes everything."



◀In another panel, National Taxpayers Union Vice President Andrew Moylan argued in favor of the "Next Generation Television" bills in Congress, saying that the retransmission consent system is outdated and the blackouts resulting from impasses between broadcasters and content owners harm consumers. "The point of retrans reform isn't to favor any side of the bargaining, it's to favor consumers," Moylan said. The legislation is not a silver bullet, he said, and there will still likely be some arguments and blackouts, but it gets rid of the hurdles.



◀However, Navigant Economics Managing Director Jeffrey Eisenach warned against "blowing up" the current system, which he said is a "well-functioning market." The alternative, he said, would be to negotiate "an incredibly complex set of contracts" with original content owners, and compared the Next Generation TV legislation to "net neutrality for broadcasters."