

Bartlett Introduces Bill to Transfer Air Force Communications Lines

WASHINGTON - Senator E.L. (Bob) Bartlett has re-introduced his bill authorizing transfer of government-owned long lines communication facilities in Alaska.

Bartlett said the bill was identical with S. 2444, which passed the Senate late last session. The House did not have time to act on the measure before adjournment.

The senator said that he had received some assurances that the House Armed Services Committee would consider the bill this year.

While the bill would authorize sale of all government-owned long lines communication facilities in the state, Air Force officials have made clear the intent was to offer for sale only those portions of the network which carry primarily commercial business.

Senator Bartlett said, "In a developing economy, particularly in one located some distance from business centers, good communications are vital."

He said that major capital improvements were required

if the system were "to meet the twin demands of more service and cheaper rates."

"Clearly, it is not the job of the Air Force to invest time and money in upgrading a commercial communications system. For Example, experience in other states has shown a direct correlation between advertising promotional rate and increased business at lower tolls. Alaskans should have the same opportunities to benefit from such practices, but the Air Force would be going far afield indeed if it became involved in a telephone advertising campaign," he said.

Bartlett pointed out that the bill and its legislative history spelled out safeguards protecting the national interest and the using public.

He explained that the Secretary of the Defense must determine that sale of any portion of the system will not affect the national security.

Also, the Air Force has stated that in seeking bids, it will announce upset prices on individual pieces of equipment and the principal competition for the purchase will be based on the operation plans and rate schedules

Bartlett . . .

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which must be submitted by bidders.

“This approach will eliminate financial bidding which could drive the cost sky high and make it impossible for the successful bidder to reduce rates,” he said.