

Dear Kathleen and House Energy & Digital Infrastructure Committee Members,

Steve Berry here. I was hoping to come to Montpelier to sit in on meetings and to hear testimony on H.527 and to speak with committee members. Unfortunately, a health concern for a family member prohibits me from coming to Montpelier this week. For that reason, I am writing a few thoughts because I am unable to appear in person.

I used to make speeches for the United Church of Christ's National Office of Communication, which at the time was under the able direction of the highly competent Dr. Everett Parker. I went to Washington, DC and testified at the FCC reminding the leadership that the people of the United States- not corporations- own the airways. Over the years I have watched almost total corporate takeover of the media (and government) and the slow erosion of the rights of individuals and municipalities. The Patriot Act which we were told was put into place for our good and to protect us from the threat of terrorism has instead been widely used to surveil Americans. A handful of corporations now own the airways and they have deeply influenced the people in power in Washington, DC. and the entire nation. Have Legislators unwittingly becoming the acolytes of the corporate powers? I don't know but I would like to find out. One way is to look at the reason why we need more cell service in a town like Manchester where our cell service has been excellent. Some of us believe that the underlying reason for more towers being sited in Manchester and throughout the state has less to do with people receiving better coverage and more to do with mining more data from individuals. Do your committee members know how data is mined or what the reason for it is or what the benefits are for locals to have their data taken from their phones and computers? Can members of your committee guarantee citizens their rights to privacy when the cell towers or pole units are located? If so, I for one would love to see the data. I have three dozen friends who would also. As importantly, we would also like to know with some certainty from you - because you are both a digital infrastructure committee **and** an energy committee -what the health impacts of electromagnetic radiation (EMR) that deals with radio frequency (RF) and electromagnetic fields (EMFs) shows. Can you point me, and others, to the data to show that siting's are safe and have no negative health impacts? We think Vermonters need to have hard data on this because there are more than 9,000 studies that have been conducted that show otherwise. (My uncle died of pancreatic

cancer and his wife of another cancer. They lived right next to high tension wires. Could those towers have impacted to their health?) In Manchester we were told that cell tower emissions were not an FCC issue based on the Telecommunications Act of 1996. We all know that Act is superannuated after thirty years but as an energy committee you can't morally sidestep the issue by relying on the FCC's supposed immunity from dealing with public concerns. Please let me know if your committee is charged with reporting on energy issues. EMFs are energy related and this is a serious energy issue that probably needs to be jointly addressed by your committee and perhaps other committees that deal with health. Does Section 248a allow for that type of seriousness and protect citizens and the public by ensuring a reasonable or meaningful path to justice if they become sick from ETFs?

The presentations made in Manchester by ATT and Verizon drew strong and vocal objections from the local citizens. The corporate presentations were unconvincing and worrying as it was brought to the attention of our Select Board how the town of Pittsfield, MA has been battling with problems concerning their cell tower for years and were sued by Verizon. In Manchester we were told that we could not provide information about the apparent health dangers of cell towers leaving some of us to wonder whether corporate influences from Washington, DC may already be impacting Vermont autonomy.

1. In our town citizens strongly voiced their opinions on why they objected to a new cell tower.
2. We urged the Select Board to vote against locating the towers based upon zoning, safety issues and aesthetics.
3. The Select Board in the Town of Manchester decided with the citizens wishes.
4. Despite this decision at least one corporate executive and lawyer arrogantly told those at a meeting that they will do as they please regardless of town decisions- as if municipalities do not have local control.
5. Some of us are of the opinion that a top-down corporate agenda seeks to be pushing forward with the design of eliminating the autonomy of Vermont towns and municipalities.

In considering H. 527 I join with a sizable and growing network of local citizens in Bennington County who are urging you and your committee to let flawed Section 248a sunset. We believe that Section 248a can't be fixed.

We believe the best way to proceed is to let Act 250 and municipal ordinances hold governing power and to prevent corporations from stripping us of our rights to self-determination as Vermonters.

Sincerely,

Steven E. Berry  
Manchester, VT 05254