

## SENATE BILL 980 TESTIMONY OF DON GARTMAN

- Good morning.
- Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to express my strong support for Senate Bill 980.
- My name is Don Gartman. I am President of the Galveston County Economic Alliance, a non-profit that helps small businesses achieve success.
- Prior to dedicating my time to the alliance, I worked 36 years for the company that is today called CenterPoint Energy. During my tenure there, I wore a number of hats, including serving as Chairman of the Board and President of EDESE, an electric utility company owned by Reliant Energy/CenterPoint Energy in Argentina.
- I preface my comments this morning with a little background on myself to make clear which hat I'm wearing today. I was born in Breckenridge Hospital, grew up in Govalle and graduated from Wm. B. Travis High School in South Austin. I am a pro-business, pro-growth proud Texan who wants to see this state continue to encourage investment and innovation.
- Our state's regulatory systems have always struggled to keep up with technological advancement. That's not a criticism; it's just the nature of the process. But we cannot accept this reality as an excuse for inaction. The modernization of our regulatory structures is an essential component of growing the state's economy.
- While you face many daunting challenges this session, I respectfully request that you make the passage of Senate Bill 980 a priority.
- The Chairman's legislation modernizes the rules and regulations governing the phone and data services that all business sectors rely on. While communications have always been an important part of doing business, today the ability to communicate and share data quickly and cheaply is the cornerstone of every business with whom I interact and invest.
- I believe your challenge as elected officials, and my challenge as a Texas voter and tax payer, is to help the regulatory systems that govern communications keep pace with technological advancements.
- I know I don't have to tell you that we cannot afford to saddle the communications industry with burdensome, out-of-date regulations.
- When allowed to operate without unnecessary impediments, businesses invest in the development of technological innovations. These innovations create new efficiencies and opportunities for Texas employers, which creates new jobs and other pro-business, pro-growth benefits.
- Mr. Chairman, I thank you for filing this important legislation, and I would be happy to support your bill in any way I can.
- Again, I thank the committee for this opportunity to express my support for Senate Bill 980.