

NEWS RELEASE

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**IMPACT OF TELECOMMUNICATION ACT
IS TOPIC OF INTERACTIVE SYMPOSIUM**

EAST LANSING, Mich. -- Wondering just what the Telecommunication Act of 1996 means to you? You'll have access to experts on the subject on Tuesday, March 12, as part of a symposium organized by the Michigan State University Department of Telecommunication.

The department will bring together representatives from industry, the university, and consumer councils beginning at 7 p.m. in Room 145 of the Communication Arts and Sciences Building. The symposium, one of a series offered by the department in conjunction with the College of Communication Arts and Sciences' 40th anniversary, will be linked to southeast Michigan, Grand Rapids and Traverse City by video. It will be accessible to the public via the Internet.

The program is designed to offer expertise and answer questions related to the far-reaching Telecommunication Act, which was passed on Feb. 15.

"Adoption of the new Telecommunication Act is a clear political, social and legal marker in telecommunication system and service development," said Tom Muth, interim chairperson of telecommunication at MSU. "It affirms that common technical communication traditions of the latter part of the industrial age are now history."

Muth noted that telecommunication has been a part of daily U.S. activities since the telegraph was patented 160 years ago. Since then, we've added the telephone, transoceanic wireless communication, voice radio, network television broadcasting, cable TV, communications satellites, and dozens of other innovations to our everyday efforts to communicate. "Add to that cellular phones, microcomputers and the Internet," Muth said, "and you have today's communication network infrastructure -- and who knows what's just around the corner?"

Featured at the MSU symposium will be professors Johannes Bauer, director of the internationally recognized Institute of Public Utilities at MSU's Eli Broad College of Business and an expert in telecommunication policy, and Thomas Baldwin, author of "Convergence: Integrating Media, Information and Communication." Also on the panel will be representatives from providers of telephone, cable and other such consumer services; a representative from the Michigan Consumer Federation; and a representative from the Michigan Public Service Commission.

Organizers have invited representatives from health care industries, education, libraries and municipal government to participate in the session, as well as legislators and Gov. John Engler. The sessions will be broadcast to specific sites in:

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- Birmingham, where it will air at Birmingham Groves High School.
- Grand Rapids, where it will air at the MSU West facility on the corner of Division and Lyon streets.
- Traverse City, where it will air at Northwest Michigan College in Room 38 of the Health Education Building.

The public may participate by e-mailing questions or ideas to 40years@td.msu.edu, before or during broadcast. The program will also be taped for future use.

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