



Consumer Counsel Participates in ACLP Telecommunications Summit

Connecticut and the rest of the U.S. communications marketplace is in the midst of a significant technological development transition, as more and more consumers move away from traditional wireline phone service (what Consumer Counsel Elin Swanson Katz calls “the kitchen phone”) to technologies such as wireless, VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol), and high-speed optical fiber for everyday communications. Recognizing that these changes impact the interests of virtually every consumer, Consumer Counsel Katz joined dozens of other public officials and other stakeholders from across the country in a series of moderated discussions designed to evaluate those current trends at the AdvancedComm Summit 2014, sponsored by the Advanced Communications Law & Policy Institute at New York Law School.

“It was a very interesting event,” Katz said. “Much of the talk was about the kitchen phone versus the cell phone and other technologies. It highlighted the tension that often arises between an industry that wants to move forward with new technologies as quickly as possible, and consumers who are dependent on landline service and may not be able to substitute another technology for the same cost or level of service. My view is we need to preserve the kitchen phone until we can ensure that everyone has a reliable, reasonably priced alternative. We are definitely in the middle of an enormous technological revolution, which I’m very excited about, but everyone, regardless of where they live, should be able to call their family, their neighbors, and especially 911 without hassle or excessive cost. Of course, I also hope that at least some folks in Connecticut will soon have access to ultra-high speed ‘one gig’ internet service, so that we can push the high-tech revolution and all of the economic, educational, and social benefits it brings even faster in Connecticut.”

The two-day event held at New York Law School on January 15 through 17, 2014, covered topics ranging from legitimate expectations of privacy among internet users to the large scale market shift toward IP networks. Each topic was debated thoroughly between a variety of participants including representatives from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), state public utility Commissioners, state legislators, the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA), and industry stakeholders such as Google, Comcast, AT&T, T-Mobile, and Verizon.