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*Deregulatory Injustice and Electronic Redlining: The Color of Access to Telecommunications*

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Abstract by Melissa Sutton

The author takes a look at the deregulation of telecommunications and the impact it has had on minorities. The article begins with a look at the 1996 Telecommunications Act, which was designed to further technological advances and improve the quality of telecommunications service through competition.

The article explores the purpose of the 1996 Act, which was to ensure universal telecommunications service to all Americans, including low-income consumers and those in rural, insular, and high-cost areas. However, the author finds that, given the dynamics of race and the ineffectiveness of competition in some of these failed markets, regulation even in a deregulatory environment, is sometimes the only effective measure to ensure that all Americans have adequate telephone service.

The article compares and analyzes access to local telephone service between whites and American Indians living in tribal areas and whites and members of minority groups. The first part of the article examines the theoretical underpinnings correlating racial with geographical areas and how this theory plays out in the provision of telephone service. Part two of the article discusses the FCC's statutory authority to examine the lack of service or inferior services of minority communities. The article then specifically addresses minority access to telephone service and allegations of disparate service in the offerings of pay phones. The article ends with recommendations for dealing with some of the problems of inner city telephone service and concludes that the racialization of telecommunications issues, coupled with deregulation, means that government regulation is necessary to combat any disparities.