

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Rule-Making
Proceeding Related To

Cessation of Certain Telecommunication
Services: WAC 480-120-083

DOCKET NO. UT-010558

Comments of Public Counsel

Attorney General of Washington

August 21, 2001

Public Counsel files these comments in response to the release of Staff's proposed amendments to the draft rule dated July 27, 2001. Public Counsel supports the strengthened notice requirements of the new draft, and while we still advocate for the incorporation of a customer transition plan as documented in our comments dated July 13, 2001, if such a plan is not ultimately part of the rule, we propose the following comments to further strengthen the rule's notice requirements.

480-120-083(3). Public Counsel recommends inserting the following or similar language as subsection (d): the exiting company's notice to customers must inform them that their ability to obtain substitute service may be impacted by the Extension of Service rules (WAC 480-120-071), and a telecommunications company's obligation to serve (RCW 80.36.090). Such notice should also refer customers to the WUTC's Consumer Affairs Department phone number, 1-800-562-6150, in the event they have difficulties during the

transition process that are not resolved by either the exiting or the successor carrier. This modification would seek to give consumers additional information regarding potentially relevant rules and alternative consumer resources with which to troubleshoot any problems they might encounter during their transition to a new provider.

Finally, it is Public Counsel's understanding that Staff may add a provision to the proposed rule requiring Commission approval of customer notices. We would support such a provision and look forward to seeing it in the next available draft. Given the unique circumstances that will likely surround a cessation of service, such an approval process will provide the Commission an opportunity to identify other relevant statutes or resources that may be of particular use to transitioning customers.

Conclusion

Absent provisions for a structured transition plan, providing customers with as much information as possible, including the existence of potentially relevant statutes and consumer resources, is paramount in ensuring that cessations of service cause minimal disruptions to basic phone service.