

Qwest

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August 21, 2002

Ms. Carole J. Washburn, Secretary
Washington Utilities and
Transportation Commission
1300 S. Evergreen Park Dr. S.W.
P.O. Box 47250
Olympia, WA 98504-7254

Re: Docket No. UT-980396
Request for approval of negotiated agreement between Qwest Corporation and
Ernest Communication, Inc.
Confidential Treatment Requested

Dear Ms. Washburn:

In accordance with the Interpretive and Policy Statement issued on June 28, 1996 in Docket No. UT-960269, please find enclosed three (3) copies of the negotiated Confidential Settlement Agreement and Release between Qwest and Ernest Communications, Inc. for filing with the Commission. Qwest seeks approval of the bracketed language in the enclosed agreement.

Qwest has previously submitted hundreds of agreements with CLECs in Washington for approval by the Commission under Section 252(e)(1). In addition to the filed agreements, Qwest also has implemented other contractual arrangements with CLECs that it does not believe fall within the filing requirements of Section 252 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

As the Commission is aware, earlier this year questions were raised regarding Qwest's decisions about these other, unfiled agreements. Notably, a complaint was filed by the Minnesota Department of Commerce alleging, after a review of dozens of Qwest-CLEC contracts, that eleven should have been filed with the Minnesota PUC. The Commission addressed this issue in the 39th Supplemental Order in Docket Nos. UT-003022/003040, paragraphs 289-95. Qwest also filed a petition with the FCC requesting a declaratory ruling as to the scope of the Section 252(a) filing requirement in this area.

Qwest has at all times operated in good faith in filing with the Commission interconnection agreements and amendments, and is committed to full compliance with the Act. After this issue arose Qwest modified its processes and standards for all new agreements with CLECs. Qwest advised the Commission of this policy by letter on May 9, 2002. Under this policy Qwest is filing all new contracts,

agreements or letters of understanding between Qwest Corporation and CLECs that create obligations to meet the requirements of Section 251(b) or (c) on a going forward basis. Qwest believes that this commitment goes well beyond the requirements of Section 252(a). For example, this policy reaches details of business-to-business carrier relations that Qwest does not think the Act requires to be filed with state commissions for approval. However, Qwest is committed to follow this standard until the FCC issues a decision on the appropriate standard in this area. (Unless requested by the Commission, Qwest has not been filing routine day-to-day paperwork, orders for specific services, or settlements of past disputes that do not otherwise meet the above definition.)

Older agreements provide a more complicated case. Qwest naturally has been concerned about any potential penalty liability with regard to "second-guessing" of its past filing decisions, especially in an area where the standards have not been clearly defined. Nevertheless, Qwest is now taking a further step as a sign of good faith. Specifically, Qwest has reviewed its currently effective agreements with CLECs in Washington that were entered into prior to adoption of the new policy. This group includes those agreements that relate to Section 251(b) or (c) services on an on-going basis which have not been terminated or superseded by agreement, commission order, or otherwise. These agreements have previously been provided in response to the Commission Bench Request in Docket Nos. UT-003022/003040. Qwest has applied its broad new review standard to all such agreements and as a result is now filing those agreements for approval under Section 252 of the Act. The agreement attached to this letter for filing is one of those agreements.

Qwest asks the Commission to approve the attached agreement such that, to the extent any active provisions of such agreements relate to Section 251(b) or (c), they are formally available to other CLECs under Section 252(i). For ease of review, Qwest has bracketed those terms and provisions in the agreement which arguably relate to Section 251(b) or (c) services, and which have not otherwise been terminated or superseded by agreement or Commission order. Qwest will make the bracketed provisions available under Section 251(i).

As noted above, Qwest has not been and is not filing routine day-to-day paperwork, settlements of past disputes, stipulations or agreements executed in connection with federal bankruptcy proceedings, or orders for specific services. Included in this last category are contract forms for services provided in approved interconnection agreements, such as signaling and call-related databases. The parties may execute a form contract memorializing the provision of such services offered and described in the interconnection agreement. Upon the Commission's request, Qwest can provide examples of routine paperwork, order documents, or form contracts for its review.

Qwest realizes that its voluntary decision to submit the attached agreement does not bind the Commission with respect to the question of Qwest's past compliance. However, Qwest submits that it has acted in good faith. In any event, Qwest's actions here should remove any argument with respect to Qwest's compliance with Section 252 now and going forward.

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Qwest requests that the Commission approve the bracketed portion of this agreement as soon as reasonably practicable. Qwest reserves its rights to demonstrate that the agreement need not have been filed in the event of an enforcement action in this area. Meanwhile, however, Qwest will offer other CLECs any bracketed terms in effect for the benefit of the contracting CLEC pursuant to the policies and rules related to Section 251(i).

Qwest will also be posting the agreement on the website it uses to provide notice to CLECs and announcing the immediate availability to other CLECs in Washington of the bracketed terms and conditions. This will facilitate the ability of CLECs to request terms and conditions, subject to the Commission's decision approving the bracketed provisions of the agreement filed here.

Given the confidentiality provisions contained in some of these agreements and the fact that the CLECs involved may deem the information contained therein confidential, Qwest has redacted those terms, such as confidential settlement amounts relating to settlement of historical disputes between Qwest and the particular CLEC, confidential billing and bank account numbers and facility locations, which relate solely to the specific CLEC and do not relate to Section 251(b) or (c) services.

In addition, Qwest asks that this agreement be considered confidential pursuant to WAC 480-09-015 for a period of seven (7) days to allow the CLECs sufficient time to object to public disclosure. Qwest will notify the CLEC of this filing and advise it of its opportunity to submit any objections regarding public disclosure to the Commission within the seven-day period.

The enclosed agreement does not discriminate against non-party carriers. It is consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity. It is also consistent with applicable state law requirements, including Commission orders regarding interconnection issues.

The Order on Arbitration Procedure also requests that a proposed order accompany the filing. Qwest requests a waiver of that requirement, and is not providing one with this filing, as the Commission has, in the past, used its own format for Orders. If this is not satisfactory to the Commission, please contact me and I will forward a proposed order immediately.

Sincerely,

Adam L. Sherr

ALS/llw

Enclosures

cc: Jeff Smock, Ernest Communications, Inc.

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