

**Exhibit ___-TC (TLW-1TC)
Docket UT-061625
Witness: Tom Wilson
REDACTED VERSION**

BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Petition of

QWEST CORPORATION

**To be Regulated Under an Alternative
Form of Regulation Pursuant to RCW
80.36.135**

DOCKET UT-061625

TESTIMONY OF

Thomas L. Wilson, Jr.

**STAFF OF
WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

January 29, 2007

REDACTED PER PROTECTIVE ORDERS IN DOCKET UT-061625

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1 **INTRODUCTION**

2

3 **Q. Please state your name and business address.**

4 A. I am Thomas L. Wilson, Jr. My business address is 1300 S. Evergreen Park Drive
5 S.W., P.O. Box 47250, Olympia, WA 98504.

6

7 **Q. By whom are you employed and in what capacity?**

8 A. I am employed by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
9 (commission) as a senior telecommunications analyst.

10

11 **Q. How long have you been employed by the commission?**

12 A. Twenty one years.

13

14 **Q. What are your education and experience qualifications?**

15 A. I have been a Telecommunications Analyst on staff at the Commission since January
16 1986. Please see Exhibit No. ____ (TLW-2) for a complete description of my
17 educational background and job experience.

18

19 **Q. Please list the additional staff witnesses and the subjects upon which they
20 provide testimony.**

21 A. Deborah Reynolds:

22 o affiliated interests, securities, transfers of property, infrastructure
23 development.

1 Kristen Russell:

2 ○ Service quality.

3 Paula Strain:

4 ○ financial review, accounting, and reporting requirements.

5

6 **SUMMARY**

7

8 **Q. What are staff's recommendations?**

9 A. Staff recommends an improved alternative form of regulation (AFOR) plan for
10 Qwest, amounting to modification of Qwest's AFOR proposal as follows:

11 1) Qwest's affiliated interest transactions should be reviewed pursuant to a streamlined
12 process, but only RCW 80.16.020¹ and WAC 480-120-375² should be waived.

13 Qwest should be required to file annual reports on affiliated interest and subsidiary
14 transactions, but individual filings at the time of the transaction would no longer be
15 necessary for the four years of the AFOR. The remaining affiliated interest statutes
16 allow the commission to investigate and disallow affiliated transactions, and Qwest
17 should remain subject to those statutes. The report includes important information
18 that the commission will need to evaluate performance under the AFOR in four years
19 (*see* testimony of staff witness Deborah Reynolds). In addition, the information in
20 the report will be used in monitoring the development of the market.

¹ Dealings with affiliated interests — Prior filing with commission required — Commission may disapprove.
² Affiliated interests — Contracts or arrangements.

1 5) Qwest's proposed waiver of service quality rules under WAC 480-120-439 should be
2 denied, and during the AFOR, Qwest should be required to maintain or improve its
3 performance under the customer service guarantee program and the Seventeenth
4 Supplemental Order in Docket No. UT-991358 (*see* testimony of staff witness
5 Kristen Russell).

6 a) Qwest should continue filing customer service guarantee reports,
7 albeit quarterly rather than monthly. Staff and Qwest have agreed
8 upon significantly streamlined reporting formats that substantially
9 reduce reporting burdens while preserving information needed to
10 evaluate performance under the AFOR.

11 b) Qwest should be allowed to exercise its option under the plan to
12 increase the rate for standalone residential flat-rated service by up to
13 fifty cents per line per month in years two through four only if the
14 number of service quality complaints reported to the commission
15 improves by more than five percent over the previous year. For
16 example, please refer to staff witness Kristen Russell's testimony at
17 page 18, Table 2, which shows that in 2004 the total number of
18 service quality complaints was 627, and in 2005 it was 516. The
19 improvement in 2005 was $(627-516)/627 = 17.7$ percent. Since a
20 17.7 percent improvement is greater than a five percent
21 improvement, then in the example, Qwest would have been allowed
22 up to the \$0.50 increase for 2006.

1 6. Qwest's request to be relieved of the requirement to maintain a jurisdictional set of
2 accounting books should be denied. Rather, the staff's proposal is to improve the
3 plan by maintaining modified and streamlined reporting requirements, and updated
4 accounting procedures (*see* staff witness Paula Strain's testimony).

5
6 7. Staff recommends improving the plan by requiring Qwest to continue allowing for
7 each residential line and Centrex-type dormitory station line, one direct dialed call to
8 directory assistance per month at no charge when an intraLATA phone number is
9 requested under the Directory Assistance Service tariff (WN U-40 Section 6.2.4). In
10 addition, the free call allowance for directory assistance would also be maintained
11 for IntraLATA and National Directory Assistance charges originating from
12 telephone services Qwest has determined are used on a continuing basis by a
13 person(s) certified incapable of using a published telephone directory. Additionally,
14 IntraLATA Directory Assistance charges will not be applicable for calls that
15 originate from hospitals.

16
17 **Q. Please describe specifically how staff's improvements to Qwest's AFOR plan**
18 **would look as a single document.**

19 A. Exhibit No. ____ (TLW-3) illustrates the specific improvements to Qwest's AFOR
20 proposal that staff recommends, and also tabulates all of staff's recommendations
21 concerning waivers under the improved AFOR plan.

22
23 **Q. Please summarize your testimony.**

1 A. My testimony provides background information, reviews Qwest’s AFOR proposal,
2 and analyzes the proposal in light of statutory policy goals and AFOR
3 considerations. I am the lead staff witness in this case concerning Qwest
4 Corporation’s (Qwest) petition for approval of an alternative form of regulation
5 (AFOR) pursuant to RCW 80.36.135. I provide general and overall policy testimony
6 on behalf of staff, and I rely upon the testimony of other staff witnesses.

7
8 Staff recommends an improved proposal for a Qwest AFOR with several important
9 changes made to Qwest’s proposal to protect the public interest. Staff recommends
10 that the commission approve Qwest’s proposal to waive the application of several
11 statutes during the period of the AFOR, and that it implement most of Qwest’s plan
12 to give the company some necessary regulatory flexibility. In effect, to make sure
13 that statutory policy goals and considerations governing AFORs are properly
14 considered, staff recommends improving the plan by maintaining, or even
15 streamlining, certain service quality, financial, accounting, reporting and record-
16 keeping requirements. Staff also recommends that the company address
17 infrastructure deployment as a condition of approval of the AFOR, and that the
18 company should have a service quality performance incentive to achieve proposed
19 rate increases for core customers. Otherwise, the plan proposed by Qwest requires no
20 further modification for approval because with staff’s suggested improvements the
21 plan will properly balance the need for regulatory flexibility with the public interest.

22
23 **Q. Please summarize your analysis of Qwest’s current environment.**

1 A. While decreasing costs through advances in technology have driven competition, it is
2 a challenge to make sure all consumers enjoy the benefits. Qwest is in a situation
3 where additional flexibility coupled with appropriate protection will make a good
4 social contract as the market for information communications technologies continues
5 to change.

6

7 The economics of Qwest's regulated situation are that the company has been steadily
8 losing a significant amount of market share in the most vulnerable as well as the
9 most profitable segments of the market, while at the same time remaining the only
10 provider in less profitable and more difficult to serve markets. In my testimony I
11 provide analysis of the economic conditions Qwest faces today, including an analysis
12 of the economies of rural versus urban access line density.

13

14 According to Qwest's witnesses, Qwest is losing many lines every month. These line
15 losses affect the majority of urban-dominated markets, and as I show in my
16 testimony, competitive losses are also impacting rural exchanges. Qwest is also
17 losing lines in both the business and residential markets. Qwest's witnesses describe
18 significant anecdotal evidence of intermodal competition by cable television
19 companies providing telephony over the Internet, and cellular phone companies
20 capturing Qwest market share. However this evidence is of insufficient detail as to
21 permit rigorous analysis of the contours of the market data pursuant to the statutory

1 criteria under the competitive classification statutes. Still, there may be vestiges, or
2 remaining pockets, of market power where there is less than effective competition.³

3

4 Staff recommends approval of an AFOR that provides Qwest with additional
5 flexibility while protecting customer groups who may have less choice. I provide
6 analysis of competitive line loss with the knowledge that a large part of the loss is
7 occurring due to evidence of intermodal competition.

8

9 Referring to the analysis provided by staff witness Paula Strain, it is also staff's
10 opinion that even when Qwest's earnings are adjusted to account for the
11 jurisdictional mismatch of revenues and costs caused by the separations freeze, and
12 for additional revenues Qwest could potentially receive during the AFOR term,
13 Qwest is still not earning its authorized rate of return. Even if the increases to
14 standalone residential rates in the improved plan were implemented, it would still not
15 be enough additional revenue to allow Qwest to earn its authorized rate of return.
16 Furthermore, there is a great deal of common cost allocated to the local exchange
17 that is not directly attributable to residential or business markets. Common costs can
18 only be allocated according to arbitrary methods. This means that denial of the
19 requested rate increases on the basis of a full-blown rate case analysis would be
20 subject to different experts arguing based on a large amount of money that can be

³ "Effective competition" means there are available alternatives, and no significant captive customers. The determination considers other market-based factors such as ease of entry, market share, and number of alternative providers, RCW 80.36.330.

1 allocated a variety of ways, and is big enough to make a huge difference, one way or
2 the other. It would be better to avoid that in an AFOR.

3

4 **Q. Would the AFOR recommendation for Qwest be applicable to any other**
5 **company?**

6 A. Not necessarily. The AFOR recommendation for Qwest may not be applicable to
7 other companies unless similar prerequisite conditions are in place. For example,
8 there must be a structural framework for competition to ensure a level playing field
9 and the potential for market forces to constrain the behavior of the firm under the
10 plan. Also, similar prerequisite conditions must be in place to provide for adequate
11 protection of service quality, and to ensure proper alignment of prices and costs.

12 Staff reserves the right to look at each AFOR on its own merit.

13

14 **BACKGROUND AND HISTORY**

15

16 **Q. Please describe your understanding of the background and history of the AFOR**
17 **statute.**

18 A. Adopted in 1989, the AFOR statute, RCW 80.36.135, was the first major piece of
19 telecommunications reform since the landmark changes authorized by the Regulatory
20 Flexibility Act of 1985 that gave the commission authority to streamline regulation
21 to address the effect of competition in the industry. The AFOR statute is described in
22 the 1989 legislative report concerning SSB 5098, laws of 1989. The background
23 statement in the report sets the stage for understanding the AFOR statute with the

1 indication that AFOR can be used as another tool besides competitive classification
2 for addressing competition, allowing for regulatory flexibility, and promoting state
3 policy goals. The AFOR statute was at least in part written in direct response to the
4 first three years of experience gained during the early implementation of the
5 Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1985. The 1989 legislative report notes in the
6 background statement that:

7 “The telecommunications industry consists of firms offering services with a
8 wide range of competitiveness. In 1985 legislation was enacted which allows
9 the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) to classify companies or
10 services as competitive, a classification which allows pricing freedom. [¶]
11 Unless a service has been declared competitive by the UTC, a telephone
12 company must submit its rates for UTC approval. This process can last nearly
13 a year, and critics contend the present system lacks effective incentives for
14 companies to become efficient.”
15

16 The AFOR statute grants the commission the authority to trade traditional rate of
17 return regulation for an alternative form of regulation subject to a set of statutory
18 policy goals and AFOR considerations. AFOR is a set of non-traditional tools in the
19 commission’s tool box. The statute first references Washington’s public policy goals
20 for telecommunications found at RCW 80.36.300:

- 21 (1) Preserve affordable universal telecommunications service;
22 (2) Maintain and advance the efficiency and availability of
23 telecommunications service;
24 (4) Ensure that rates for noncompetitive telecommunications services do not
25 subsidize competitive ventures of regulated telecommunications companies;
26 (5) Promote diversity in the supply of telecommunications services and
27 products in telecommunications markets throughout the state;
28 (6) Permit flexible regulation of competitive telecommunications companies
29 and services.
30

1 In addition to the public policy goals declared in RCW 80.36.300, the commission
2 must also consider, in determining the appropriateness of any proposed alternative
3 form of regulation, whether it will:

- 4 (a) Facilitate the broad deployment of technological improvements and
5 advanced telecommunications services to underserved areas or underserved customer
6 classes;
- 7 (b) Improve the efficiency of the regulatory process;
- 8 (c) Preserve or enhance the development of effective competition and protect
9 against the exercise of market power during its development;
- 10 (d) Preserve or enhance service quality and protect against the degradation of
11 the quality or availability of efficient telecommunications services;
- 12 (e) Provide for rates and charges that are fair, just, reasonable, sufficient, and
13 not unduly discriminatory or preferential; and
- 14 (f) Not unduly or unreasonably prejudice or disadvantage any particular
15 customer class.

17 **Q. Does the statute require an affirmative finding on each of these considerations?**

18 A. No. The statute does not require that the commission make an affirmative finding
19 that the AFOR will satisfy or go beyond the status quo for each of these
20 considerations. Rather, the commission must only consider whether the AFOR will
21 further the considerations. The commission may still approve an AFOR that is
22 neutral with regard to one or more of the considerations.

24 **Q. Is the plan, as modified by staff, consistent with the statute?**

25 A. Yes. The improved AFOR plan for Qwest is consistent with each of the statutory
26 goals and considerations, and there is no impediment to the commission approving
27 the improved plan.

29 AFOR BASICS

1 **Q. Please describe the basics of an AFOR, and discuss how, together with the**
2 **staff's recommended improvements, the plan meets the needs of an AFOR.**

3 A. An AFOR attempts to increase efficiency incentives for utilities. Major components
4 of an AFOR typically include the following:

- 5 • Definition of performance based upon data external to the utility
 - 6 • Reward-penalty system
 - 7 • Efficiency gains that are shared with the ratepayer
 - 8 • Greater flexibility for the utility
 - 9 • Protections for ratepayers from abuse of market power.⁴
- 10

11 The following summary of a discussion by David Sappington provides some
12 academic background for designing an AFOR.

13 In practice, the firm's information about its environment is often better than
14 the regulator's information. The information asymmetry arises naturally
15 because of such factors as staff, differences in technical training, and
16 proximity to both consumers and the production process. Since the regulator
17 is unable to monitor all relevant activities directly, the regulator is forced to
18 provide indirect incentives for the firm to act diligently. These indirect
19 incentives are created by basing the firm's compensation on observable
20 measures that are correlated with the firm's unobserved behavior . . .
21 . . . The optimal use of performance measures depends critically on the
22 properties of the performance measures that are available. Two
23 characteristics of performance measures that are particularly important:
24 sensitivity, and variability . . .

- 25 • There may be ways to reduce undesired variability. One applicable
26 general principle is to hold the firm responsible for outcomes that are
27 clearly under its control, and to limit the financial responsibility of the
28 firm for outcomes that are largely beyond its control . . .
- 29 • Often, the regulator is not certain how difficult or costly it would be
30 for the firm to improve its performance . . . [t]hus, the better the
31 firm's information about how to best achieve a broad goal relative to
32 the regulator's information, the stronger the case for setting broad

⁴ Johannes M. Bauer, Michigan State University, Performance Based Regulation, 40th Annual Regulatory Studies Program, East Lansing, Michigan, August 5, 1998.

1 performance standards, thereby delegating to the firm greater
2 discretion in how to achieve the identified goal.⁵
3

4 This is why staff recommends a report on infrastructure development at the end of
5 the four year period – to inform the commission rather than arbitrarily choosing
6 performance benchmarks which could inadvertently lead to ill-effects such as
7 unintended winners and losers. Sappington continues . . .

8 The key is to make it unattractive for the firm to implicitly understate its
9 capabilities by selecting a very modest performance target and subsequently earn
10 large rewards for exceeding the target.

- 11 • One way to limit the chances that a proposed incentive scheme will
12 jeopardize the financial integrity of the firm is to allow the firm to choose
13 one incentive scheme from a carefully designed menu of alternative
14 schemes. This can induce the regulated firm to reveal the difficulty of the
15 task it faces. The AFOR statute makes the status quo an option for the
16 firm by allowing the commission to approve a plan which then the
17 company may choose whether it wishes to opt in. In essence, current
18 performance serves as the benchmark against which future performance
19 is measured and rewarded.
- 20 • The regulator is often under significant pressure to change the rules of the
21 game after the fact.⁶
22

23 The improved plan strikes a balance with a four year plan that will be completed and
24 reviewed at the end. Incentive plans have to have limited flexibility during the
25 duration of the plan.⁷
26

27 **Q. Why would the commission want to do an AFOR?**

28 A. The commission may choose to do an AFOR because the commission is heavily
29 reliant on information supplied by the utility. Due to the asymmetry, the commission

⁵ David Sappington , Review of Industrial Organization, 9, June 1994, 245-272 “Designing Incentive Regulation.”

⁶ Sappington.

⁷ Id.”

1 may not be able to adequately assess the effort of the utility to improve efficiency. In
2 the face of rapidly evolving market conditions, it is wise to create a new social
3 contract with the company, in effect negotiating solutions to regulatory problems that
4 may be created when the old social contract departs from traditional rate of return
5 regulation. The old contract was for a quasi-exclusive franchise in exchange for the
6 opportunity to earn a fair rate of return. In exchange, the public interest was
7 protected with economic regulation and the obligation to serve. This worked to
8 provide economic efficiency when there was one provider. However, today,
9 apparently almost all of Qwest's markets are contestable, and so average prices and
10 cross-subsidies are no longer economically efficient, inhibiting technological
11 advancement.

12

13 THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

14 **Q. How does the plan as modified by staff address the needs of the social contract?**

15 A. Faced with these changes, the improved plan provides the commission with a new
16 social contract that:

- 17
- 18 • Provides stability and certainty for standalone basic exchange services for
 - 19 core residential customers, limiting the potential for cross-subsidization;
 - 20 • Prohibits de-averaging core rates or abandoning core markets;
 - 21 • Commits to a modernization program;
 - 22 • Protects quality of service;
 - 23 • Protects competition; and
 - 24 • Allows the commission to monitor financial performance.⁸

⁸ For further discussion of the social contract, please *see* "Thoughts on a New Social Contract," Funding the Future of the Telecommunications Industry; Managing Technological Innovation to Satisfy Consumer Demands, by V. Louise McCarren, presented at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Saratoga Springs, New York, June 3 – 5, 1985, Revised July 26, 1985.

1 Borrowing from McCarren, this new social contract reflects expectations about what
2 the state of technology will be, and the notion that competition is increasing in most
3 markets. If competition or technology does not prove out, then an AFOR with an
4 overly long period would be a mistake.⁹ The improved plan strikes an appropriate
5 balance.

6
7 Core monopoly residential standalone rates are the subject of the most debate, and so
8 the plan is supported by staff analysis of whether the rates under the plan are fair,
9 just, reasonable, sufficient, and promote universal service. The plan shifts some of
10 the risk in Qwest’s future away from the core monopoly residential customer. The
11 proposal allows the commission to manage dual competing goals of economic
12 efficiency and consumer welfare. In so doing, the plan also ensures that the level
13 playing field conditions that the commission has worked long and hard to implement
14 will continue to have their market-opening effect and improve consumer welfare.
15 The plan does not require the presence of competition in every service and
16 geographic market. Since ubiquitous competition for certain pockets of services and
17 geographic markets may be weaker, the plan strikes an appropriate balance between
18 flexibility for Qwest and protecting the public interest. The plan also solves the
19 problem of protecting monopoly ratepayers at the same time that investment in new
20 technology is being deployed. Qwest is likely to be far more constrained by the
21 effects of competition under the improved plan, than it will ever be by the

⁹ Id. page 9.

1 commission. In many markets characterized by competition, explicit governmental
2 intervention is inferior to private, individual negotiation and contracting.¹⁰

3

4 SUMMARY OF AFOR BASICS

5 **Q. Please summarize the typical types of applications for an AFOR.**

6 A. Typically, an AFOR is used in the following applications:

- 7 • Regulating the price of remaining monopoly segments,
- 8 • Regulating the price of “essential” inputs like unbundled network elements,
- 9 • Setting quality of service benchmarks,
- 10 • Implementing universal service policies.¹¹

11

12 AFORs have been used in the UK, US, NZ, Latin America.¹²

13 TRADITIONAL RATE OF RETURN BASICS

14 **Q. Please briefly summarize traditional rate-base, rate of return regulation (ROR).**

15 A. With typical rate-base rate of return regulation, investments, expenses, and the cost
16 of capital are approximated with allowed operating income. The commission
17 determines a revenue requirement, performs a demand forecast and rate design, and
18 then reviews the plan and compares it with actual results.¹³ In the case of Qwest this
19 is accomplished using Qwest’s accounting records, and demand data to determine
20 Qwest’s intrastate results of operations which are modified to include specific
21 commission-based adjustments.

22

¹⁰ See “Economic Efficiency, the Economics Discipline, and the “Affected-With-A-Public-Interest” Concept” by Edythe S. Miller, Journal of Economic issues, Volume XXIV, No. 3 September 1990.

¹¹ Bauer.

¹² Bauer.

¹³ Bauer.

1 PROBLEMS WITH TRADITIONAL RATE OF RETURN REGULATION

2 **Q. Please briefly summarize problems with traditional rate-base, rate of return**
3 **regulation (ROR).**

4 A. Traditional rate-base ROR regulation results in a “cost plus mentality” that can lead
5 to various problems including over-investment and gold plating, high administrative
6 costs, incompatibility with emerging competitive environment and the need for
7 flexibility to react to changing market conditions. Also, traditional rate-base ROR
8 regulation impedes risk-taking, creates an incentive to cross-subsidize, and is usually
9 a poor performance yardstick.¹⁴

10
11 We can also learn from previous experience with inter-carrier compensation.¹⁵

- 12 • Long run marginal costs, rather than average total costs, are the proper basis
13 for understanding pricing decisions.
- 14 • Nevertheless, not all rates can be set at long run marginal cost and still cover
15 average total cost.
- 16 • Nor should all rates be set at long run marginal cost because of differences
17 between service and geographic markets, particularly when customers
18 compete with one another using the services – secondary effects can be
19 significant.
- 20 • Sometimes efficient pricing at the producer level can result in serious and
21 unintended effects at the secondary business level.¹⁶

22 As Kahn notes,

24 “Special consideration may have to be given to the institutional implications
25 and consequences of discriminatory price competition. This would include
26 the following: (a) the important stimulus that price competition imparts to
27 keeping companies on their toes, energetic in cutting costs, enterprising in

¹⁴ Id.

¹⁵ “The Economics of Regulation – Principles and Institutions,” Volume I, Economic Principles, Seventh Printing, MIT 1988, by Alfred E. Kahn, Chapter Six, Ratemaking in the Presence of Competition, page 160.

¹⁶ Id.

1 experimenting with price reductions, innovative in service, and (b) the
2 possibility that competition will be predatory or destructive.”¹⁷
3

4 AFOR’S ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

5 **Q. What are some of AFOR’s advantages over traditional rate of return
6 regulation?**

7 A. AFOR plans can reward efficiency, productivity, process and service innovations
8 and gains, ensure that gains are shared with shareholders, and an AFOR is generally
9 more compatible with a competitive environment. Additionally, an AFOR can allow
10 diversification but can be designed to eliminate the incentive to shift costs to captive
11 customers, and it can also provide for corporate risk-taking while protecting core
12 monopoly customers.

13
14 **Q. What are some of AFOR’s disadvantages?**

15 A. There can be several disadvantages to an AFOR, particularly with twenty-twenty
16 hindsight. For example, I will later provide a discussion of the dissatisfactory
17 experience Washington had under an AFOR with Qwest’s predecessor, U S WEST
18 (*see* Table 1). As Bauer notes, although an AFOR can avoid many of the drawbacks
19 of traditional rate of return regulation when partial competition is happening, it can
20 be difficult to design an AFOR that sufficiently addresses all interests under
21 changing conditions. Therefore, an AFOR works best as a transitional tool and may
22 lose its effectiveness over the long run. Determining the appropriate length and level

¹⁷ Id.

1 of intervention is critical for the incentive mechanism of an AFOR to be effective
2 and in the public interest.¹⁸

3

4 **Q. Can an AFOR protect monopoly customers, or will it allow the utility to engage**
5 **in cross-subsidization? Please comment.**

6 **A.** An AFOR can be designed with constraining conditions to protect monopoly
7 customers. But it is not simple in the case of price cap regulation. The problems of
8 price cap regulation include: the transformation from rate-of-return regulation, the
9 adoption of a price cap formula, cross-subsidization, and the relationship between
10 regulation and competition.¹⁹ These potential results imply that the regulator must
11 periodically review price cap results to realign prices with the cost of service and to
12 ensure that a level playing field that would nurture competition develops in every
13 market.²⁰

14

15 **Q. Does the plan recommended by staff address these issues?**

16 **A.** Yes. The improved plan recognizes and addresses these issues. A transformation of
17 the financing, accounting, reporting and record-keeping requirements is effectuated
18 subject to rigorous review and analysis as testified by staff witness Paula Strain. A
19 schedule for prices of core monopoly services is set, and cross-subsidization is
20 addressed by the status quo regulatory regime as well as staff's analysis of rates in
21 this case. The relationship between competition and regulation is addressed with

¹⁸ Id.

¹⁹ Robert Loube, Journal of Land Economics, August 1995, 71 (3) 286-98.

²⁰ Id.

1 significant flexibility as warranted. Staff's proposal to improve the plan provides for
2 a periodic review to allow for realignment of prices and costs, if necessary, and the
3 plan ensures continuation of level playing field conditions to allow competition.
4

5 AFOR VERSUS COMPETITIVE CLASSIFICATION AS A TOOL

6 **Q. Is the AFOR approach rather than competitive classification an acceptable**
7 **approach to Qwest's need for flexibility at this time?**

8 A. Yes, because competitive classification for some services is problematic in some
9 cases, and a good AFOR plan can provide flexibility but still retain appropriate
10 protections. For example, some of Qwest's services retain vestiges of market power
11 like standalone residential, WTAP, access, and others listed as exceptions under the
12 plan, as well as business services that have not yet been classified as competitive.
13 Therefore, standalone residential service, WTAP, access services and others are
14 protected by remaining available *a la carte* under tariff in the AFOR and vestigial
15 non-competitive business services are to be given competitive flexibility, but they
16 are protected as well by prohibitions on geographic deaveraging.
17

18 THE U S WEST AFOR; 1990 - 1994

19 **Q. What was the commission's prior experience with AFOR for the largest local**
20 **exchange company, Qwest (formerly known as U S WEST)?**

21 A. In October 1988 the commission issued an open letter on incentive regulation, stating
22 that the ultimate criteria in judging incentive regulation proposals would be whether
23 they serve the public interest and generate real benefits for consumers.

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23

In February 1989, in Docket No. U-89-2698-F, the commission issued an over-earnings complaint, later amended, against Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Company d/b/a/ U S WEST Communications (now Qwest). Several months later parties submitted a proposed settlement and a stipulation to an alternative form of regulation, and U S WEST subsequently asked for approval of the alternative form of regulation.

In January 1990, the commission approved the five year plan for an AFOR for U S WEST, stating that each similar proposal would be evaluated on its own merits. The settlement, as approved, provided an estimated cumulative five-year revenue decrease of \$337.75 million. The commission said that the plan ensured that ratepayers would benefit from efficiency gains and cost savings arising out of regulatory change, and would afford ratepayers the opportunity to benefit from improvements in productivity due to technological change. The commission believed that the modified plan would not result in a degradation of the quality or availability of efficient telecommunications services, and that rates would be fair, just and reasonable.

The U S WEST AFOR agreement covered the five year period 1989-1994, with a two month “window” in July 1992 for the commission to determine whether the agreement should be terminated early. During the agreement period there were to be no increases in the monthly recurring rates for exchange residence or business

1 service. The minimum authorized rate of return under the AFOR was 9.25 percent,
2 with the sharing of earnings after 11 percent, and all excess profits due to mandatory
3 cost factors like tax and accounting changes going to ratepayers. Otherwise excess
4 earnings between 11 percent and 11.625 percent were distributed with 60 percent
5 being returned back to ratepayers. Between 11.625 percent and 12.25 percent, half
6 of excess profits went back to ratepayers, and above that, 40 percent went back to
7 ratepayers.

8
9 The total sharing dollars under the plan are shown in Table 1 below. The company
10 was required to file periodic earnings statements that were reviewed by staff in a
11 three week period. The process of earnings reviews was always very difficult and
12 stressful due to the quantity of information filed, and the limited time available to
13 review it.

1

TABLE 1

2

U S WEST Earnings Sharing, First AFOR 1990 - 1994

Row		1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	Total
1	Total USWC Share	\$22,429,000	\$31,778,273	\$38,829,168	\$4,200,000	\$0	\$97,236,441
2	USWC share to depreciation reserve	\$5,172,740	\$10,593,127		\$4,200,000		\$19,965,867
2.1	1993 Interest accrual				\$453,000		\$453,000
2.2	1994 Interest accrual				\$337,000		\$337,000
3	USWC share to shareholders	\$17,256,260	\$21,185,146	\$38,829,168	-\$790,000	\$0	\$76,480,574
	(Row 1-2-3-2.1-2.2)						
4	Total Ratepayer Share	\$21,680,000	\$28,658,000	\$33,300,000	\$12,937,000	\$0	\$96,575,000
5	Ratepayer share to refund (res, bus, carrier common line)	\$14,880,000	\$19,105,000				\$33,985,000
6	Ratepayer share to depreciation reserve	\$5,000,000	\$9,553,000				\$14,553,000
7	E-911 service improvements	\$1,800,000					\$1,800,000
8	Ratepayer share to compress rate groups/restructure business			\$24,100,000			\$24,100,000
9	Ratepayer share to toll rate restructure			\$7,200,000			\$7,200,000
10	Ratepayer share to access charge restructure			\$2,000,000			\$2,000,000
11	Total Excess Revenues Dedicated to	\$26,852,740	\$39,251,127	\$33,300,000	\$17,927,000	\$0	\$117,330,867

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1. Re-basing rates to effect an equal percent reduction in local exchange access line rates, based upon the latest 12 month commission-adjusted results of operations using the authorized rate of return (ROR) of 10.53 percent;
2. Setting a maximum cap on earnings at 13.5 percent overall ROR, with all excess earnings returned to the ratepayer;
3. Requiring U S WEST to reduce held orders to historic levels, with penalties for failing to meet the benchmark, including reducing shareholders' excess earnings;
4. Ordering U S WEST to file a rate case prior to termination of the AFOR, and to assume the burden of proof in that proceeding; and
5. Ordering U S WEST to report at the end of the AFOR on the operation of the AFOR, a quality of service study, a productivity study, a list of innovative and new services introduced during the plan, and a description of U S WEST's proposal for a new AFOR.

Ultimately, the U S WEST AFOR was not renewed. In February 1995, U S WEST filed a general rate case in Docket No. UT-950200. In December 1996 the commission issued the 15th Supplemental Order setting new rates. In August 1997, Qwest filed for rate adjustments to "make the company whole" in Docket No. UT-970766. In January 1998, the commission's Tenth Supplemental Order was issued rejecting tariff revisions, and requiring re-filing.

Q. Please discuss lessons that the commission can learn from the previous AFOR experience with U S WEST for purposes of informing its decision on the current proposal from Qwest.

A. The previous AFOR with U S WEST does not provide a basis for denial of the current proposal or staff's recommended improvements. The previous experience informs the commission very little in the instant matter. As the names suggest, U S WEST is not even the same company that Qwest is today.

1 The company's position in the market has changed drastically. In the early 1990s at
2 the time of the U S WEST AFOR, there was really not much opportunity for
3 competition to benefit U S WEST ratepayers. Local exchange competition had not
4 even been ratified until the State Supreme Court ELI decision in 1994.²¹

5
6 In 1990 – 1994, the commission had yet to implement the prerequisites for effective
7 local competition. The commission had not addressed interconnection until Docket
8 No. UT-941464. The market-opening regulatory reforms of the Telecommunications
9 Act of 1996 had not yet occurred. The cost of unbundled network elements had not
10 been addressed until the generic cost of service docket series beginning with Docket
11 No. UT-960369. The development of competition-friendly operations support
12 systems and wholesale performance incentives had not been created for Washington
13 until this century in the proceedings to address whether the Bell Company had
14 opened up its local market to competition and should be permitted to compete for in-
15 region long distance service under Section 271 of the Telecommunications Act of
16 1996.²² U S WEST was in a completely different operating environment then,
17 compared to today's Qwest, and the unsatisfying results of the previous AFOR
18 should not be expected to recur due to the existence of a viable competitive

²¹ 123 Wn. 2d 530, IN RE CONSOLIDATED CASES, Mar. 1994 [No. 59999 – 8. En Banc. March 17, 1994.] In the Matter of the Consolidated Cases Concerning the Registration of Electric Lightwave, Inc. and Registration and Classification of Digital Direct of Seattle, Inc. ELECTRIC LIGHTWAVE, INC., ET AL, Respondents. WASHINGTON INDEPENDENT TELEPHONE ASSOCIATION, ET AL, Appellants, V THE UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION, Appellant.

²² See, In the matter of the investigation into U S WEST Communications, Inc., compliance with Section 271 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Docket No. UT-003022, Qwest long term PID administration and QPAP review, Docket No. UT-030388, and Docket No. UT-003040, allowing Statement of Generally Available Terms filed by U S WEST Communications, Inc., as amended June 12, 2000, to go into effect pending completion of Commission review, pursuant to the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

1 environment necessary to provide the company behavioral discipline and the specific
2 conditions set forth in the improved proposal with staff's recommendations designed
3 to protect the public interest.

4

5 **REVIEW OF QWEST'S PETITION**

6

7 **Q. Please summarize your understanding of Qwest's AFOR proposal.**

8 A. In its petition, Qwest wants to be accorded the same regulatory flexibility that is
9 granted to competitively classified companies. Qwest proposes provisions for
10 streamlined review and approval of rates, service quality and various regulatory
11 filing requirements subject to certain exceptions and transition period requirements.

12

13 The commission grants a list of waivers for competitively classified
14 telecommunications companies because when these companies are subject to
15 effective competition, various rules meant for monopolies are no longer necessary.

16 The list of waivers for competitively classified telecommunications companies is
17 memorialized at WAC 480-121-363, and includes waiver of the following

18 requirements:

- 19 (a) RCW 80.04.300 (Budgets to be filed by companies -- Supplementary budgets);
- 20 (b) RCW 80.04.310 (Commission's control over expenditures);
- 21 (c) RCW 80.04.320 (Budget rules);
- 22 (d) RCW 80.04.330 (Effect of unauthorized expenditure -- Emergencies);
- 23 (e) RCW 80.04.360 (Earnings in excess of reasonable rate -- Consideration in fixing
- 24 rates);
- 25 (f) RCW 80.04.460 (Investigation of accidents);
- 26 (g) RCW 80.04.520 (Approval of lease of utility facilities);
- 27 (h) RCW 80.36.100 (Tariff schedules to be filed and open to public);

- 1 (i) RCW 80.36.110 (Tariff changes -- Statutory notice -- Exception);
2 (j) Chapter 80.08 RCW (Securities) (except RCW 80.08.140, State not obligated);
3 (k) Chapter 80.12 RCW (Transfers of property);
4 (l) Chapter 80.16 RCW (Affiliated interests);
5 (m) WAC 480-80-101 Tariff requirements through WAC 480-80-143 Special
6 contracts for gas, electric, and water companies;
7 (n) Chapter 480-140 WAC (Commission general -- Budgets);
8 (o) Chapter 480-143 WAC (Commission general -- Transfers of property);
9 (p) WAC 480-120-102 (Service offered);
10 (q) WAC 480-120-339 (Streamlined filing requirements for Class B
11 telecommunications company rate increases);
12 (r) WAC 480-120-399 (Access charge and universal service reporting);
13 (s) WAC 480-120-344 (Expenditures for political or legislative activities);
14 (t) WAC 480-120-352 (Washington Exchange Carrier Association (WECA));
15 (u) WAC 480-120-369 (Transferring cash or assuming obligation);
16 (v) WAC 480-120-375 (Affiliated interests -- Contracts or arrangements);
17 (w) WAC 480-120-389 (Securities report); and
18 (x) WAC 480-120-395 (Affiliated interest and subsidiary transactions report).
19

20 In addition, with the recent elimination of the price list filing requirement,
21 RCW 80.36.100 (Tariff schedules to be filed and open to public — Exceptions) is no
22 longer applicable to competitively classified services under RCW 80.36.100(5).²³
23

24 **Q. What elements of regulation would remain in place under Qwest's proposal?**

25 A. Current regulation not impacted by the petition would remain subject to the *status*
26 *quo*, including all orders and rules governing wholesale arrangements. This would
27 mean, for example, that Qwest would still be subject to wholesale service quality and
28 market-opening provisions, and to normal prohibitions against pricing below cost

²³ See also RCW 80.36.333 (Price lists in effect before June 7, 2006 — Extension) and RCW 80.36.338 (Withdrawal of price list — Customer information, opportunity to accept changes in rates, terms, or conditions — Cancellation period).

1 found in RCW 80.36.300(4),²⁴ RCW 80.36.330(6),²⁵ and most rules and regulations
2 governing telecommunications operations.²⁶

3

4 In addition, under new section WAC 480-120-266²⁷, although competitively
5 classified service offerings are not treated as a tariff and are not reviewed or
6 approved by the commission at the time of filing, the commission will, when
7 appropriate, investigate or complain against a rate, term, or condition provided
8 pursuant to competitive classification. If the commission determines that a rate, term,
9 or condition offered pursuant to competitive classification is ambiguous or conflicts
10 with other offers, there is a rebuttable presumption that the conflict or ambiguity
11 should be construed in favor of the customer unless the rate, term or condition was
12 not proposed by the company.

13

14 Finally, the rates, charges, and prices of services classified as competitive under
15 RCW 80.36.330 must cover the cost of providing the service. Costs must be
16 determined using a long-run incremental cost analysis, including as part of the

²⁴ “[e]nsuring that rates for noncompetitive telecommunications services do not subsidize the competitive ventures of regulated telecommunications companies”

²⁵ “[n]o losses incurred by a telecommunications company in the provision of competitive services may be recovered through rates for noncompetitive services. The commission may order refunds or credits to any class of subscribers to a noncompetitive telecommunications service which has paid excessive rates because of below cost pricing of competitive telecommunications services”

²⁶ See WAC 480-120, including provisions governing general rules, establishing service and credit, payments and disputes, discontinuing and restoring service, posting and publication of notices, customer information, telecommunications services, safety and standards rules, and adoptions by reference to other standards setting bodies.

²⁷ In the rulemaking to eliminate the price list filing requirement, the commission plans to rewrite current WAC 480-80-202 into NEW SECTION WAC 480-120-266, carrying forward several regulations while editing them to acknowledge price lists will no longer be filed at the commission. The language in my testimony here is based upon the upcoming version.

1 incremental cost, the price charged by the offering company to other
2 telecommunications companies for any essential function used to provide the service,
3 or any other commission-approved cost method. These provisions are currently being
4 moved from WAC 480-80 to a new section, WAC 480-120-266 in the current
5 rulemaking to eliminate price list filing requirements, UT-060676.

6
7 Under the AFOR, Qwest would still be a regulated company subject to significant
8 regulatory oversight. Upon review in four years, the commission can also decide to
9 continue or terminate all or part of the AFOR. The commission's rules governing
10 competitively classified services provide that the commission retains the authority to
11 impose additional or different requirements on any telecommunications company in
12 appropriate circumstances, consistent with the requirements of law (WAC 480-121-
13 016(2)).

14
15 GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN A CHANGING MARKET

16 **Q. Please describe and comment upon the proposed provisions for regulatory**
17 **flexibility.**

18 A. Qwest would be treated as though it had been classified by the commission as a
19 competitive telecommunications company, subject to several important conditions
20 constraining the company's behavior to protect customers who may be subject to
21 vestiges of market power.

1 Chapter 347, Laws of 2006, enacted in the 2006 legislative session, eliminated the
2 requirement that telecommunications companies file price lists for services the
3 Commission has found to be competitive in nature. This would mean that subject to
4 important exceptions listed in the petition and described below, Qwest would not file
5 for approval with the commission for the rates, terms or conditions for services
6 treated as competitive.

7

8 **Q. What Qwest services are already classified as competitive?**

9 A. Qwest has already received competitive classification of many of its services
10 including toll and centrex, as well as almost all business switched digital local
11 exchange and almost all dedicated services in almost all urban areas. Furthermore,
12 competitive classification has been granted statewide for Qwest for analog local
13 exchange switched business services. In some cases, certain digital business
14 exchange services remain subject to tariff in more rural areas of the state. Please
15 refer to Qwest witness Mark Reynolds' exhibit MSR -3 for a concise listing of all
16 competitive and non-competitive services to see how they would be affected by the
17 petition.

18

19 **Q. Please discuss the provision that Qwest will be subject to the same regulation as**
20 **companies classified as competitive pursuant to RCW 80.36.320, subject to**
21 **certain exceptions and certain transition period requirements.**

22 A. In summary, Qwest's petition has a relatively small incremental effect on the
23 regulatory status of the company as a whole. The change would amount to additional

1 competitive flexibility only for a relatively small number of additional customers,
2 primarily in rural areas.

3

4 Qwest should only be granted competitive company treatment for the four years of
5 the AFOR. At the end of the AFOR, the commission should be able to consider
6 whether the plan was a success, and may consider permanent waivers at that time.

7

8 As illustrated in Figure 1, since the 1980s Qwest's industrial environment has gone
9 from one technology, device, and regulated provider to multiple technologies,
10 devices, and providers with robust competition in many markets.

11

12

FIGURE 1²⁸

13

1980		NOW
One	Technology	Multiple
One	Device	Multiple
One	Provider	Multiple

²⁸ From "The Evolving Economics of Competition" by Charles Davidson and Michael Santorelli, Advanced Communications Law and Policy Institute, A Division of the Media Center at New York Law School, Presented at the Qwest Regional Oversight Committee Meetings, Rapid City, South Dakota, October 18, 2006. <http://www.regionaloversightcommittee.org/Fall%2006%20RC/handoutroc06.htm>

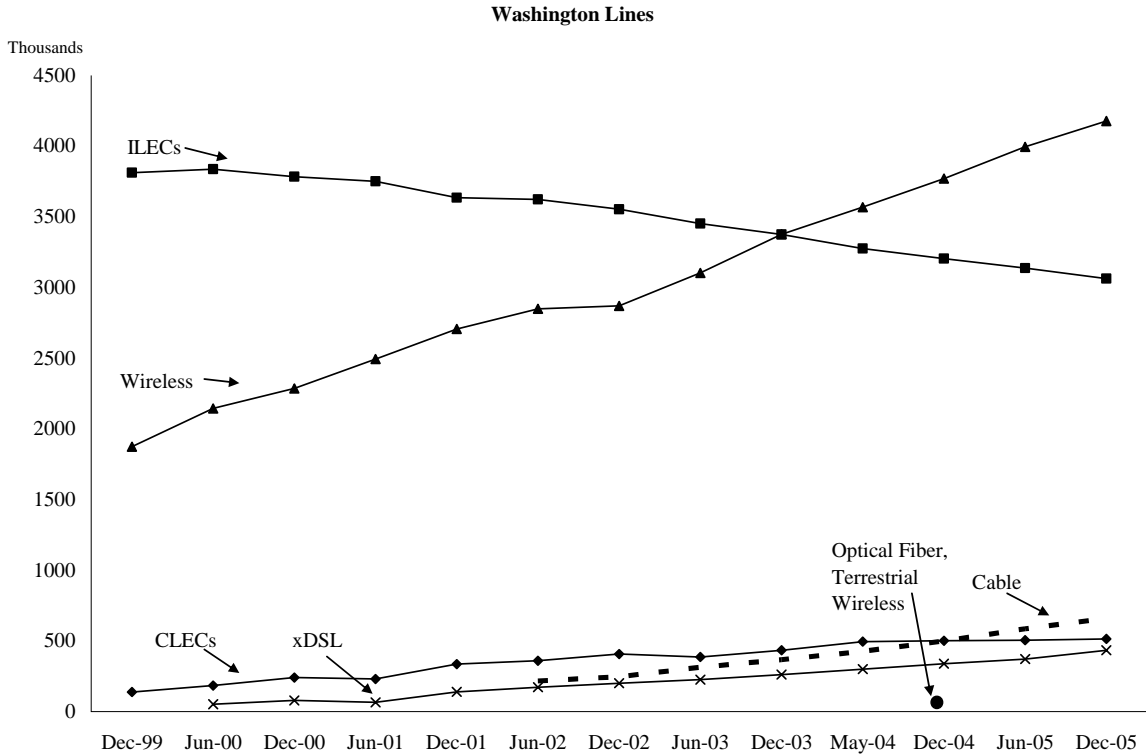
Regulated	Price	Robust Competition
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1

2 Qwest's regulated telecommunications services - both non-competitive and
 3 competitive - are subject to increasing levels of competition in a market where
 4 consumers choose from an array of regulated and unregulated services offered over a
 5 variety of intermodal technologies. This effect is vividly illustrated by studying the
 6 market for lines in Washington. Figure 2 illustrates FCC competition data since
 7 December of 1999.²⁹

8

FIGURE 2



9

²⁹ See FCC Wireline Competition Bureau Statistical Reports at <http://www.fcc.gov/wcb/iatd/stats.html>.

1 Today, as Figure 2 shows with supporting figures from Table 2 below, there are
 2 more wireless subscribers than wireline subscribers. There are also more cable lines
 3 than CLEC lines, even though there weren't even enough cable lines to measure just
 4 five years ago in 2001. Keep in mind that CLECs have been authorized to operate in
 5 Washington since before the Telecommunications Act of 1996, so cable's rise is all
 6 the more significant. Notice further, as shown in Table 2 below, that Qwest's percent
 7 share of all ILEC lines has declined in the past six years from almost 68 percent
 8 down to a little over 61 percent, indicating that line losses are affecting Qwest
 9 particularly hard.

11 Table 2³⁰

Row	Lines	December 2000	December 2005	2005 Percent Share of Total
1	CLECs	240,514	514,149	5.8%
2	ILECs	3,784,183	3,062,790	34.6%
3	Wireless	2,286,082	4,177,196	47.2%
4	xDSL	79,130	434,505	4.9%
5	Cable		660,151	7.5%
6	Total Washington	6,389,909	8,848,791	100.0%
7				
8	Qwest	2,571,025	1,903,498	
9	Qwest Percent of ILEC Lines	67.9%	62.1%	
10	Qwest Percent of Total	40.2%	21.5%	

³⁰ Note: Qwest lines are December 2000 and June 2006.

1 I made this analysis to illustrate how the choices that consumers have in Washington
2 today are changing. For purposes of the analysis I assume that all lines counted in the
3 FCC reports are equivalent because they all provide access to telecommunications. A
4 consumer could use any of these lines for voice telecommunications, and in many
5 circumstances, for data as well. The relevant market encompasses
6 telecommunications broadly. Market participants include CLECs, cable companies,
7 VoIP, and wireless service providers.³¹ With that assumption, the analysis compares
8 wireline activity by incumbent local exchange companies (ILECs) and competitive
9 local exchange companies (CLECs) with wireless carriers, and also with high speed
10 lines (greater than 200 kbps) provided over xDSL, optical fiber, terrestrial wireless,
11 and cable.

12
13 Consumers can choose to purchase access to telecommunications from any of these
14 intermodal competitors in many parts of Qwest's territory and the data shows that
15 consumers are enjoying the choice of alternatives more and more. Although the data
16 is statewide, and thus includes not only Qwest territory, but also other ILEC territory
17 as well, the data is reflective of Qwest's experiences, and typical of most ILECs,
18 because Qwest does still serve over 60 percent of the ILEC lines in the state.

19
20 Also, almost 50 percent of the current interconnection agreements on file with the
21 commission are with Qwest (Qwest currently has local interconnection agreements

³¹ See the California commission's landmark August 2006 decision assessing and revising the regulation of Verizon and other telecommunications utilities in its rulemaking 05-04-005 succinctly expressing the point that voice constitutes a single communications market, page 70.

1 pursuant to Sections 251 and 252 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 with
2 approximately 100 competing carriers, not including commercial agreements).

3 EFFECTIVE COMPETITION

4 **Q. Please describe the commission’s experience with determining the prerequisites**
5 **for effective local competition.**

6 A. The commission recognized a list of eleven prerequisites for effective local
7 competition in 1995:

8

- 9 1. central office interconnection arrangements
- 10 2. connections to unbundled network elements
- 11 3. seamless integration into local exchange company interoffice networks
- 12 4. seamless integration into local exchange company signaling networks
- 13 5. equal status in/control of network databases
- 14 6. local number portability
- 15 7. reciprocal inter-carrier compensation arrangements
- 16 8. equal rights to/control over number resources
- 17 9. cooperative practices and procedures
- 18 10. economically efficient pricing signals
- 19 11. intraLATA equal access³²
- 20

21 This list was a common theme once again in staff’s approach to generic
22 interconnection in Docket No. UT-941464 (preceding the Telecommunications Act
23 of 1996).³³ Also, with regard to the prerequisites for local competition, Dr. Lee

³² In the Matter of the Petition of Electric Lightwave, Inc., for an Order Granting Competitive Telecommunications Company Classification, Docket No. UT-940403, Order Granting Petition, at 4 (January 11, 1995).

³³ BEFORE THE WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION, WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION, Complainant, vs. U S WEST COMMUNICATIONS, INC., Respondent, DOCKET NO. UT-941464, TCG SEATTLE AND DIGITAL DIRECT OF SEATTLE, INC., Complainant, vs. U S WEST COMMUNICATIONS, INC., Respondent, DOCKET NO. UT-941465, TCG SEATTLE, Complainant, v. GTE NORTHWEST, INC., Respondent, DOCKET NO. UT-950146, GTE NORTHWEST, INC., Third Party Complainant, v. U S WEST COMMUNICATIONS, INC., Third Party Respondent, ELECTRIC LIGHTWAVE, INC., Complainant, v.

1 Selwyn of Economics and Technology, Inc., and Hatfield Associates, Inc., wrote a
2 book in 1994 entitled The Enduring Local Bottleneck – Monopoly Power and the
3 Local Exchange Carriers. The authors described the local exchange bottleneck and
4 the prerequisites for local competition, and predicted the local bottleneck would
5 endure for five to ten years. They listed the following prerequisites, among other
6 discussion: full local exchange company interconnection, local number portability,
7 control of numbering, control of distribution, control of switching, and control of
8 transport. These prerequisites were all measured and met by Qwest in the 271
9 cases.³⁴ Together with the evidence of actual competition, the structural framework
10 of the 271-mandated provisions and safeguards in place are critical to staff's
11 analysis.

12
13 **Q. Please discuss the commission's experience with relevant competitive**
14 **classification cases.**

15 A In the case of Qwest, this commission has substantial experience gauging and
16 addressing effective competition. In Docket UT-86-34 et al, the commission
17 classified centrex-type services of Pacific Northwest Bell (PNB) as competitive, not
18 including the local loop.³⁵ One of the major issues in that case was measuring the
19 cost of service in order to address concerns at the time about cross-subsidization. In

GTE NORTHWEST, INC., Respondent, DOCKET NO. UT-950256, Direct Testimony of Thomas L. Wilson, Jr., On Behalf of the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, April 17, 1995, page 30.

³⁴ See, In the matter of the investigation into U S WEST Communications, Inc., compliance with Section 271 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Docket No. UT-003022, Qwest long term PID administration and QPAP review, Docket No. UT-030388, and Docket No. UT-003040, allowing Statement of Generally Available Terms filed by U S WEST Communications, Inc., as amended June 12, 2000, to go into effect pending completion of Commission review, pursuant to the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

³⁵ Cause No. U-86-34 Et. Al, Fourth Supplemental Order, April 7, 1987.

1 1987, in a case involving a historically dominant carrier, the commission classified
2 AT&T as a competitive telecommunications company. At that time AT&T retained
3 a 75 percent market share.³⁶

4
5 In Docket No. U-88-1997-P the commission classified PNB's Billing and Collection
6 Services as competitive, and in Docket No. U-88-2052-P, the Company's high
7 volume long distance was classified as competitive.

8
9 Up until 1999 the commission had not received petitions for competitive
10 classification of a service for less than the entire operating territory of a company in
11 Washington. In Docket No. UT-990022 the commission relied on the phrase
12 "relevant market" and approved competitive classification of U S WEST DS3
13 services in certain wire centers. Although the commission noted that competitors did
14 not have physical plant in service at every single location in the affected wire
15 centers, the commission found that entry into the market was occurring.

16 We find that because competitors have the ability to construct their own
17 facilities or to lease unbundled network elements at cost-based rates or resell
18 existing facilities pursuant to the Telecommunications Act of 1996, U S
19 WEST lacks the ability to sustain prices substantially above cost in these two
20 areas without losing market share.³⁷
21

³⁶ *In the Matter of the Petition of AT&T Communications of the Pacific Northwest, Inc., for Classification as a Competitive Telecommunications Company*, Docket No. U-86-113, Fourth Supplemental Order at 11 (June 5, 1987).

³⁷ *In the Matter of the Petition of U S WEST COMMUNICATIONS, INC., for Competitive Classification of its High Capacity Circuits in Selected Geographical Locations*, Docket No. UT-990022, Eighth Supplemental Order Granting Amended Petition for Competitive Classification at 14 (December 21, 1999.)

1 The commission found that the services were subject to effective competition in
2 some Seattle wire centers and a portion of Spokane.

3

4 In Docket No. UT-000883 the commission classified local business analog services
5 provided over DS1 as competitive in the following urban wire centers: Bellevue:
6 Glencourt and Sherwood; Seattle: Atwater, Campus, Cherry, Duwamish, East,
7 Elliott, Emerson, Lakeview, Main, Sunset and West; Spokane: Chestnut, Fairfax,
8 Hudson, Keystone, Moran, Riverside, Walnut and Whitworth; Vancouver: Orchards
9 and Oxford. Statewide authority was requested but denied partly on the basis of
10 inadequate evidence of competition (the Hirschmann-Hirfindahl Index was relied on
11 heavily in an anti-trust-like review focused on that particular measure of market
12 concentration), but also, because OSS was not yet in place to promote
13 wholesale/retail service quality parity, and prerequisites for effective local
14 competition were still under evaluation and development in the 271 case. The
15 innermost layer of the onion – the local exchange -- was being unpeeled a little more,
16 revealing remaining monopoly services at the core.

17

18 In Docket No. UT-021257 the commission classified digital business exchange
19 services over a DS1 in certain wire centers: Bellevue: Glencourt and Sherwood;
20 Seattle: Atwater, Campus, Cherry, Duwamish, East, Elliott, Emerson, Lakeview,
21 Main, Sunset and West; Spokane: Chestnut, Fairfax, Hudson, Keystone, Moran,
22 Riverside, Walnut and Whitworth; Vancouver: Orchards and Oxford. This item was
23 approved at an open meeting by a voice vote.

1

2 In Docket No. UT-030614, recognizing the full implementation of market-opening
3 measures was taking effect, the commission classified all Qwest business analog
4 local exchange services as competitive statewide. In Docket No. UT-050258 the
5 commission classified by voice vote at a regular open meeting all remaining digital
6 business exchange services including private line, frame relay and all types of digital
7 services in specific geographic areas served by 58 wire centers in the following six
8 competitive market areas: Seattle/Tacoma (38 wire centers), Spokane (7),
9 Olympia/Longview (4), Vancouver (5), Pasco/Yakima (3), and Bellingham (1).

10

11 In summary, at this time, Qwest has pursued competitive classification in nearly all
12 of its service areas and for almost all of its services.

13

14 **Q. Has Qwest opened its local market to competition?**

15 A. Yes. According to approval recommendations by the commission³⁸ and the U.S.
16 Department of Justice for authority to provide in-region long distance pursuant to
17 Section 271 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Qwest has met the 14-point
18 competitive checklist.³⁹ In addition, Qwest has opened its local market to

³⁸ See, In the matter of the investigation into U S WEST Communications, Inc., compliance with Section 271 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Docket No. UT-003022.

³⁹ SEC. 271(c)(2)(B) [47 U.S.C. 271] BELL OPERATING COMPANY ENTRY INTO INTERLATA SERVICES.COMPETITIVE CHECKLIST.--Access or interconnection provided or generally offered by a Bell operating company to other telecommunications carriers meets the requirements of this subparagraph if such access and interconnection includes each of the following:

(i) Interconnection in accordance with the requirements of sections 251(c)(2) and 252(d)(1).

(ii) Nondiscriminatory access to network elements in accordance with the requirements of sections 251(c)(3) and 252(d)(1).

1 competition. Qwest accordingly received 271 approval for Washington from the
2 Federal Communications Commission (FCC) with findings of provisioning parity,
3 deployment of operations support systems, and change management processes.
4 Qwest has filed and received approval of a Statement of Generally Available
5 Terms,⁴⁰ and the Company is subject to provisions for performance assurance,
6 reporting, monitoring and compliance.⁴¹

7
8 WAIVERS

(iii) Nondiscriminatory access to the poles, ducts, conduits, and rights-of-way owned or controlled by the Bell operating company at just and reasonable rates in accordance with the requirements of section 224.

(iv) Local loop transmission from the central office to the customer's premises, unbundled from local switching or other services.

(v) Local transport from the trunk side of a wireline local exchange carrier switch unbundled from switching or other services.

(vi) Local switching unbundled from transport, local loop transmission, or other services.

(vii) Nondiscriminatory access to--

(I) 911 and E911 services;

(II) directory assistance services to allow the other carrier's customers to obtain telephone numbers;

and

(III) operator call completion services.

(viii) White pages directory listings for customers of the other carrier's telephone exchange service.

(ix) Until the date by which telecommunications numbering administration guidelines, plan, or rules are established, nondiscriminatory access to telephone numbers for assignment to the other carrier's telephone exchange service customers. After that date, compliance with such guidelines, plan, or rules.

(x) Nondiscriminatory access to databases and associated signaling necessary for call routing and completion.

(xi) Until the date by which the Commission issues regulations pursuant to section 251 to require number portability, interim telecommunications number portability through remote call forwarding, direct inward dialing trunks, or other comparable arrangements, with as little impairment of functioning, quality, reliability, and convenience as possible. After that date, full compliance with such regulations.

(xii) Nondiscriminatory access to such services or information as are necessary to allow the requesting carrier to implement local dialing parity in accordance with the requirements of section 251(b)(3).

(xiii) Reciprocal compensation arrangements in accordance with the requirements of section 252(d)(2).

(xiv) Telecommunications services are available for resale in accordance with the requirements of sections 251(c)(4) and 252(d)(3).

⁴⁰ Docket No. UT-003040, allowing Statement of Generally Available Terms filed by U S WEST Communications, Inc., as amended June 12, 2000, to go into effect pending completion of Commission review, pursuant to the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

⁴¹ Qwest long term PID administration and QPAP review, Docket No. UT-030388

1 **Q. If Qwest were treated as a competitively classified telecommunications**
2 **company, various statutes and rules would be waived. Please discuss the**
3 **requested waivers that Qwest seeks in its AFOR proposal.**

4 A. Competition will serve the same purpose as the statutes and rules that would be
5 waived with a few exceptions for affiliated interests, transfers of property, and cash
6 transfers, as discussed in the testimony of staff witness Deborah Reynolds. Qwest
7 would still be subject to all remaining rules and statutes including prohibitions on
8 below cost pricing, telecommunications operations and service quality requirements
9 at both the retail and wholesale levels. Staff witnesses Paula Strain and Kristen
10 Russell recommend modification of the waivers as related to compliance with the
11 accounting and service quality provisions in the rules. Staff recommends approval of
12 the plan with those improvements. The competitive influences of the market along
13 with the retained regulatory controls of the AFOR as further improved by staff's
14 recommendations should provide adequate safeguards for the public.

15

16 SERVICE QUALITY

17 **Q. Please describe Qwest's proposed provisions concerning retail service quality.**

18 A. Please refer to the testimony of staff witness Kristen Russell for a complete review.

19 Qwest is seeking waiver of retail service quality requirements immediately.

20 However, Qwest would continue compliance with all Class A reporting requirements

21 during the four years of the AFOR.

22

1 Under its proposal, Qwest would not report to the commission every month;
2 however, Qwest would still have to retain records that would be relevant, in the
3 event of a complaint or investigation, to a determination of the company's
4 compliance with the service quality standards. Also, Qwest proposes to be relieved
5 of customer service guarantee program reporting requirements in the Seventeenth
6 Supplemental Order in Docket UT-991358.

7

8 **Q. Please provide staff's critical analysis of the proposed provisions concerning**
9 **service quality.**

10 A. Staff recommends maintaining service quality regulation for Qwest that is consistent
11 with all other Class A carriers during the four years of the AFOR. Please refer to the
12 testimony of staff witness Kristen Russell for a complete review. This would put
13 Qwest on the same basis as Verizon, Embarq, Eschelon, and CenturyTel during the
14 four year period.

15

16 The service quality reporting requirements should not be waived at the beginning of
17 the transition period, and instead, the issue should be considered once again during
18 the review period at the end of the AFOR in four years. To waive the rules now
19 would mean that in four years the commission would have to take back the waiver
20 then if it felt that service quality was an issue. It would be more appropriate for
21 Qwest to show in four years why it should be removed, rather than placing the
22 burden elsewhere.

23

1 Qwest has already reached an agreement on minimal reporting requirements with
2 staff, as Ms. Russell indicates in her testimony. There is no need for service quality
3 reporting for this major carrier to differ from the levels established in rule for
4 similarly situated carriers.

5
6 In order to provide Qwest with an appropriate service quality incentive, staff
7 recommends the following: Qwest should be allowed to exercise its option under the
8 plan to increase the rate for standalone residential flat-rated service by up to fifty
9 cents per line per month in years two through four only if the number of service
10 quality complaints reported to the commission improves by more than five percent.
11 For example, please refer to staff witness Kristen Russell's testimony at page 18,
12 Table 2, which shows that in 2004 the total number of service quality complaints was
13 627, and in 2005 it was 516. The improvement in 2005 was $(627-516)/627 = 17.7$
14 percent. Therefore, in the example, since a 17.7 percent improvement is better than a
15 five percent improvement, Qwest would have been allowed up to the \$0.50 increase
16 for 2006.

17
18 In addition, to promote service quality in the future, any time there is a major outage
19 in a given area with a cause that is within Qwest's control, and that affects the
20 availability of advanced telecommunications services, Qwest should build in either
21 more redundancy to serve that area or a technological improvement that removes the
22 vulnerability that caused the outage (*see* testimony of staff witness Deborah
23 Reynolds).

1

2 DURATION AND REVIEW

3 **Q. Please describe the four year term and review process at the end of the AFOR.**

4 A. The terms of the AFOR would be effective upon approval by the commission and
5 remain in effect for at least four years. Six months prior to the four year anniversary
6 there would be a review of the provisions of this AFOR to determine if changing
7 market conditions warrant modifications to the plan. At the four year anniversary,
8 either the commission or Qwest may reopen the AFOR proceeding to propose
9 modifications to the plan.

10

11 **Q. Please critically analyze the provisions for the length of the AFOR period and**
12 **the review process at the end of the AFOR.**

13 A. The proposal is for a four year term with a review to begin six months before the end
14 of the four years. With an AFOR, there are tradeoffs between the length of the period
15 before the plan is subjected a comprehensive review, the allocative efficiency of the
16 plan, and the productive efficiency incentives of the plan.⁴² Given the rate at which
17 Qwest's position in the market seems to be changing, a plan shorter than two years
18 would probably be too short to gain any insights, but a plan longer than four years
19 would probably be too long and might result in unforeseeable circumstances. The
20 review process should be timely and allow opportunity for interested parties to
21 participate. It is staff's understanding that parties with intervener status in this

⁴² Johannes M. Bauer, Michigan State University, Performance Based Regulation, 40th Annual Regulatory Studies Program, East Lansing, Michigan, August 5, 1998

1 proceeding would automatically be involved in the review if it occurs in this same
2 docket.

3

4 PROTECTIONS

5 **Q. Please describe the exceptions that Qwest proposes to the provisions.**

6 A. The streamlined regulatory regime that would be granted to Qwest under the
7 provisions of the four year AFOR proposal carves out a list of services that would
8 not be granted the flexibility of competitive classification. The services listed in this
9 exception would remain subject to the full range of the commission's oversight
10 including the tariff filing requirements of RCW 80.36.100.

11

12 The services subject to this exception are subject to significant public interest
13 concerns as vital public goods and can also be viewed as being subject to vestiges of
14 market power. The list of services in the exception would include the following basic
15 and wholesale services:

16 a. Standalone Residential Exchange Services: Exchange Areas; Flat/Measured
17 Exchange Service Options; Hunting Service; Public Response Calling Service;
18 Directory Services – Listing Services and Custom Number Service; Operator
19 Services – Local Operator Service Surcharges; Intercept Service; and Operator
20 Verification/Interrupt Service. As described by Qwest witness Mark Reynolds, this
21 means that even though Qwest would have pricing flexibility for business services,
22 and almost all other services it offers except those listed here, Qwest would still have
23 to file a tariff for approval to change any aspect of the rates, terms, or conditions of

1 residential services including line extensions, extended area service, and various
2 ancillary services.

3 b. Washington Telephone Assistance Program (WTAP). This provision would
4 protect low income residents in Washington from any tariff changes to the WTAP
5 program by requiring that it remain subject to the full range of commission
6 oversight.

7 c. Tribal Lifeline. This provision would protect Native Americans, who may
8 have little bargaining power.⁴³

9 d. Link-up Programs.

10 e. Basic and Enhanced Universal Emergency Number Service – 911. This
11 provision guarantees that any change to the rates, terms, or conditions of emergency
12 service would be subject to commission review and approval in the tariff filing
13 process.

14 f. The AFOR leaves the commission’s authority to regulate Qwest’s wholesale
15 obligation under the Telecommunications Act of 1996 intact, and does not address
16 existing carrier-to-carrier service quality requirements, including service quality
17 standards or performance measures for interconnection and appropriate enforcement
18 or remedial provisions in the event Qwest fails to meet service quality standard or
19 performance measures. Essentially, Telecom Act issues are off the table.

⁴³ “By just about any measure used, individuals living in Native communities or villages typically have less income, receive less education, and suffer from higher unemployment and poverty rates than individuals in non-Native communities. Native communities lag far behind non-Native communities in basic infrastructure such as roads, utilities, and housing. . . . Only 39 percent of rural households in Native communities have telephones compared to 94 percent for non-Native rural communities.” Assessment of Technology Infrastructure in Native Communities, Final Report, June 1999, Prepared by the College of Engineering, New Mexico State University, for the Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. Executive Summary.

1 g. Interconnection Service. The provision of crucial competitive access to
2 operations support systems (OSS), and to bottleneck unbundled network elements
3 (UNEs), collocation, and interconnection under the Telecommunications Act of 1996
4 would not be changed by Qwest's AFOR proposal. The commission's
5 implementation and oversight of its responsibilities under the Telecommunications
6 Act of 1996 would not be altered, including the performance/penalty payments for
7 OSS. Non-competitive network services that are prerequisites for effective local
8 competition would still be available subject to full commission review. This will
9 ensure that the commission has full oversight of the conditions promoting
10 competitive market discipline for Qwest's behavior under the terms of the AFOR
11 proposal.

12 h. Resale Service. By absolutely preserving the availability of the resale option
13 for competitors, even new entrants can readily provide Qwest with significant market
14 pressure to keep rates, conditions and terms for all of its services within a range of
15 reasonableness.

16 i. Access Service. The AFOR proposal does not change the status quo tariff
17 filing requirement and review process governing the provision of access services for
18 the origination and termination of competitors' traffic.

19
20 RETAIL PROTECTION

1 **Q. Please analyze the proposal to exclude competitive treatment for Qwest's**
2 **provision of standalone residential services.**

3 A. Standalone residential service will remain subject to full tariff oversight. This is
4 another necessary condition for approval. Although staff believes that Qwest is
5 experiencing significant competition in the market for residential local exchange
6 services, staff also believes that the market for residential local exchange services is
7 still characterized by vestiges of market power. For example, staff does not believe
8 that all residential consumers have the choice of an alternative provider in all
9 geographic areas within Qwest's service territory. Keeping the provision of this
10 service under the commission's full oversight under tariff ensures that Qwest will
11 have to first obtain the commission's approval to change any of the rates, terms or
12 conditions governing residential local exchange service. That way the commission
13 can make sure that captive customers are not abused under the plan. This condition
14 includes protection of existing extended area service routes (EAS) and the
15 availability of directory services and operator assistance. The same philosophy
16 applies to the other services that will remain subject to tariff oversight.

17
18 Protecting Low Income Subscribers

19 **Q. Please analyze and discuss the provision to maintain tariff oversight of WTAP,**
20 **and please begin by describing WTAP.**

21 A. WAC 480-122-020 requires every telecommunications carrier eligible to receive
22 federal universal service funds (ETCs) under Section 214 of the Telecommunications
23 Act of 1996 to offer WTAP assistance rates and discounts. WTAP is funded by a

1 telephone assistance tax on all switched access lines and is collected by wireline
2 local exchange companies. There is a matching federal funds component to the
3 program. The fund is administered by the Washington Department of Social and
4 Health Services (DSHS). These are critical public interest services that should not be
5 placed in conflict with any telecommunications company's operations and the
6 commission should approve this aspect of the plan.

7

8 **Q. How many WTAP customers are impacted by Qwest's proposal?**

9 A. As of November 30, 2006, Qwest had 73,883 WTAP customers. Additionally, Qwest
10 provided WTAP credits to 16 resale accounts. The number of WTAP customers that
11 Qwest serves changes from time to time. From November 2005, to November 2006,
12 Qwest experienced a one percent reduction in the number of WTAP customers.
13 Qwest states that it believes this reduction is due primarily to the overall decline of
14 Qwest access lines in the state. Assuming a similar decline of access lines in future
15 years, Qwest anticipates the number of WTAP customers to be as follows:

16 2007: 73,144
17 2008: 72,413
18 2009: 71,689
19 2010: 70,972.
20

21 **Q. Please describe the pricing for WTAP.**

22 A. Qwest bills residential customers in Washington \$12.50 a month for a flat-rated line.
23 While all of Qwest's residential customers in the state are charged the same rate for
24 this service, WTAP customers receive a Federal Lifeline credit of \$2.67 and a State
25 WTAP credit of \$1.83 to help offset the cost of their basic line. These credits have

1 effect of reducing the lifeline rate for WTAP customers to only \$8.00. The federal
2 subscriber line charge for residential customers in Washington is \$5.84. WTAP
3 customers get a corresponding Federal Lifeline credit of \$5.84 to offset this charge.

4
5 If Qwest raises the standalone rate for residential service by \$0.50 per month, per
6 line, then the Federal Lifeline credit and State WTAP credits would be increased to
7 maintain the lifeline rate for WTAP customers at \$8.00. Thus if Qwest increases the
8 rate, then the “draw” on the fund would increase.

9

10 **Q. How many WTAP households receive reduced monthly charge benefits?**

11 A. In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2005, WTAP provided reduced monthly charge benefits
12 to 166,223 households.⁴⁴

13

14 **Q. How many households could potentially be served by WTAP?**

15 A. In SFY 2005 DSHS sent 402,995 additional notices of potential eligibility for WTAP
16 to households receiving qualifying cash, food or medical assistance.⁴⁵ Thus, with
17 166,223 households participating in the program, and with 402,995 additional
18 households potentially eligible, the program served 29 percent of all of the

⁴⁴ Report to the Legislature, Washington Telephone Assistance Program, Year 18 of Program Operation, July 1, 2004, through June 30, 2005, December 2005, Department of Social and Health Services Economic Services Administration, Division of Employment and Assistance Programs.

⁴⁵ DSHS, id.

1 households that were potentially eligible in SFY 2005. In 1999, Washington was
2 ranked with the ninth highest lifeline take rate in the country.⁴⁶

3

4 **Q. Should Qwest be required to absorb any increases in standalone residential**
5 **rates to hold WTAP harmless under the four year AFOR plan?**

6 A. No. In the Verizon rate case, Docket No. UT-040788, Verizon was authorized to
7 increase the rate for residential services by \$2.43 per month in 2004, and an
8 additional \$1.47 in July of 2007. Verizon did not have to absorb the difference for
9 WTAP customers. The Federal Lifeline credit and State WTAP credit absorbed the
10 increase without further commission consideration. Although Qwest serves more
11 WTAP customers than any other ILEC, the same treatment that was afforded to
12 Verizon in Docket No. UT-040788 should be afforded to Qwest here. Thus, the
13 increases should be permitted with the understanding that an increased draw on the
14 State WTAP fund will result.

15

16 The “take rate” of 29 percent implies that the program can be designed to absorb
17 additional revenue requirements posed by the potential for Qwest standalone
18 residential increases under the improved plan. Therefore, low income subscribers
19 will be protected. The 2004 penetration rate for telephone service in Washington of

⁴⁶ “Closing the Gap: Universal Service for Low-Income Households” by Carol Weinhaus –
Telecommunications Industries and Analysis Project, Tom Wilson - WUTC, Gordon Calaway - NECA, Robert
Kwiatowski – NECA, Mark Lemler – AT&T, Dan Harris – Verizon, Eugene Goldrick – Verizon, Pat
McLarney – Illinois Commerce Commission, Sally Simmons – Florida Public Service Commission, August 1,
2000, page 10.

1 96.5 percent is still very high and compares favorably to the national average of 95.7
2 percent in 2004.⁴⁷

3

4 Wholesale Protection

5 **Q. Please provide critical analysis of the proposal to exclude regulatory flexibility**
6 **from Qwest's provision of interconnection under the Telecommunications Act**
7 **of 1996.**

8 A. The AFOR does not address the commission's authority to regulate Qwest's
9 wholesale obligation under the Telecommunications Act of 1996, nor does it address
10 existing carrier-to-carrier service quality requirements, including service quality
11 standards or performance measures for interconnection and appropriate enforcement
12 or remedial provisions in the event Qwest fails to meet service quality standard or
13 performance measures. Staff does not believe that this condition is diminished if
14 Qwest negotiates new commercial agreements outside of the context of the market-
15 opening provisions of Sections 251 and 252 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996,
16 because of stipulations with WeBTEC, FEA/DOD and Joint CLECs memorialized in
17 the improved plan to ensure that the commission will have a full opportunity to
18 review such matters if they become germane.

19

20 This condition on the AFOR is desirable because it ensures that all of the
21 commission's work to open the market to competition remains in place. Competitive

⁴⁷ See FCC Wireline Competition Bureau statistical reports, Recent Releases, December 2006 Monitoring Report, Section 6, Tables 6.4 and 6.2 respectively.

1 discipline constraining Qwest’s behavior under a regime of streamlined regulatory
2 oversight will be a key to the plan’s success. With provisions for effective
3 competition, Qwest’s price behavior will be subject to the potential for continuing
4 current and future forms of market discipline.

5

6 REQUIREMENTS – YEARS 0 - 4

7 **Q. Please describe the transition period requirements of the AFOR proposal.**

8 A. During the four year transition period several requirements would apply:

9 1. The current rate for standalone residential service is \$12.50. To protect
10 customers in the residential market from unwarranted price increases (assuming
11 residential customers are subject to more Qwest market power than other classes of
12 customers, especially in low-demand, high-cost areas), Qwest would be allowed to
13 make a tariff filing to increase the standalone residential exchange service recurring
14 rate by no more than 50 cents in any year of the four year transition period. Qwest
15 would not be compelled to increase the price, so Qwest’s decision will be at least
16 partially subject to the conditions that the market will bear. Under the AFOR, the
17 standalone residential exchange service recurring price would be capped at \$14.50.

18

19 2. According to Qwest’s proposal for an AFOR, although Qwest’s digital
20 business services, analog private line services, and residential exchange service
21 features and packages would be treated as competitively classified services, Qwest
22 would be prohibited from geographically de-averaging the non-recurring and
23 monthly recurring rates for these services. This will have the effect of allowing all

1 boats to rise with the tide. If competition pressures Qwest to reduce rates in urban
2 areas, Qwest will have to offer the benefit of that competitive pressure to subscribers
3 in rural areas as well, where competition may not be as fierce.

4
5 3. As mentioned earlier when I described provisions for service quality, Qwest
6 will continue to provide service quality reporting during the 4 year transition period
7 consistent with the 'Class A' company reporting requirements in WAC 480-120-
8 439(1). Qwest will modify its current service quality report such that it complies
9 with WAC 480-120-439, but provides a level of reporting detail consistent with that
10 provided by other Class A companies. Specifically, Qwest's monthly service quality
11 reporting detail will be consistent with that provided by Verizon, CenturyTel, and
12 Embarq. In any AFOR proposal service quality is often considered to be of prime
13 importance, because it is theoretically possible that a carrier under an AFOR could
14 perceive that it has an incentive to reduce investment and expenses associated with
15 repair, maintenance and investment in service quality enhancing measures. Staff's
16 recommendation for modification to tie the potential for price increases to standalone
17 residential services provides an incentive for performance, and ensures that the
18 commission will continue to have complete oversight of service quality data to
19 ensure that service quality remains high. Please refer to the testimony of staff witness
20 Kristen Russell for a detailed analysis of service quality reporting issues.

21
22 4. Qwest's AFOR proposal is to treat Qwest as a competitive company. That
23 would therefore grant Qwest waiver of WAC 480-120-355 from compliance with

1 standardized commission accounting rules which specify that Qwest must follow the
2 1998 version of the federal Uniform System of Accounts (USOA) with modifications
3 to meet Washington accounting requirements.
4

5 5. Even though Qwest seeks to be afforded the same regulatory waivers that the
6 commission commonly grants competitive companies by rule, WAC 480-120-366,
7 Qwest proposes to be bound by the transfer of property statute, RCW 80.12, for
8 purposes of reviewing any merger involving its regulated company for the four-year
9 transition period. Further, even though a competitively classified
10 telecommunications company would be granted a waiver of the cash transfer rule
11 and subsidiary transactions rules, Qwest proposes, for a four-year transition period,
12 to be bound by the parts of those rules that are currently being challenged in the
13 Court of Appeals of the State of Washington Division II pending a decision by that
14 Court. If the decision is in Qwest's favor the rules will not apply to Qwest. If the
15 decision is in the Commission's favor, Qwest agrees to be bound by the rules.
16

17 RISING STANDALONE RESIDENTIAL RATES, FALLING ECONOMIES OF SCALE

18 **Q. Please analyze Qwest's proposal for pricing standalone residential services**
19 **during the four years of the plan - cap the monthly price of standalone**
20 **residential exchange service at \$14.50 - Qwest may increase the standalone**
21 **residential exchange service recurring rate by up to \$.50 in any year.**

22 A. Any AFOR containing a provision for automatic price increases should have an
23 objective basis in cost. Staff witness Paula Strain provides detailed financial and

1 accounting analysis of Qwest's rate of return which shows that the current rates [REDACTED]
2 [REDACTED], and that the proposed increases to
3 the residential rate are not likely to change that outcome.
4

5 In addition, please see Exhibit ___ -C (TLW-4-C) for a hypothetical analysis of
6 Qwest's basic exchange rates versus rates based upon total element long run
7 incremental cost (TELRIC). In this analysis, I have assumed that all residential
8 customers simply pay the standalone rate of \$12.50, and multiplied the number of
9 lines in each exchange by that rate. Then I compared that result to hypothetical
10 revenues that would be achieved at TELRIC prices listed in Qwest's interconnection
11 tariff for unbundled network element loops, which a competitor can purchase
12 according to a five-zone pricing scheme that recognizes that costs go up in rural
13 exchanges where economies of scale and access line densities are low. The analysis
14 uses the same access line density method I used in Exhibit ___ -C (TLW-5-C) and
15 classifies a rural exchange as one with less than 100 access lines per square mile, and
16 urban exchanges as those with more than 100 access lines per square mile.
17

18 Exhibit ___ -C (TLW-4-C) shows that Qwest's average rates are hypothetically
19 compensatory overall and for business services statewide, but that residential rates
20 are hypothetically not priced above TELRIC statewide. Even residential urban rates
21 are below a hypothetical TELRIC level, and residential rural rates are also
22 substantially below TELRIC (hypothetically). Overall, rural rates are hypothetically
23 not generating enough revenue to cover TELRIC, although rural business rates are

1 hypothetically making money. If residential rates were increased to \$13 per line per
2 month, the results of the hypothetical would not change, and residential service
3 would hypothetically still not earn as much money at the basic rate compared to what
4 it would be if the rate were equal to TELRIC. Heroically assuming no more line loss
5 (all else being equal), if the residential rate were increased to the maximum allowed
6 under the improved plan, \$14.50 per line per month, then both residential and urban
7 rates for standalone residential service would be sufficient together to cover overall
8 hypothetical TELRIC costs by a margin of approximately \$20 million.

9
10 **Q. Please explain how economies of scale are related to the discussion of Qwest's**
11 **production environment.**

12 A. Underlying the structural, behavioral, and performance conditions of the
13 telecommunications industry, economy of scale is an important, technologically
14 driven determinant, shaping the industry itself.⁴⁸ Economies of scale mean that the
15 average cost of production declines with an increase in size, prevailing when the
16 down slope ends at minimum efficient size.⁴⁹ The production function for
17 telecommunications services is subject to economies of scale.

18
19 For example, economies of scale occur in switching when the cost per line of
20 providing switching service declines as the number of lines increases. However,
21 these economies are not available in sparsely populated areas because of the high

⁴⁸ The Economics of Industrial Organization, Second Edition, by William G. Shepherd, 1979 by Prentice Hall, page 7.

⁴⁹ Id. Page 40.

1 cost of providing loop plant sufficient to serve enough users to achieve economies of
2 scale in switching.⁵⁰

3

4 Exhibit ____-C (TLW-5-C) is an analysis of the economics of scale upon Qwest's
5 provision of basic service. The analysis provides access line densities for Qwest
6 exchanges in 2000 and 2006 for both residential and business lines and includes
7 public access lines. Using mapping software that digitizes maps of Qwest's
8 exchanges in Washington, the square mileage of each exchange is estimated.

9 Dividing the number of lines by the square miles in an exchange yields an estimate
10 of access line density. Sorting the Qwest exchanges by access line density (page 1 of
11 Exhibit ____-C (TLW-5-C), the analysis assumes that exchanges with access line
12 density per square mile greater than 100 are urban.⁵¹ When I sorted the data by
13 change in access line density (change in lines) on page two of the exhibit, you can
14 see that both rural and urban exchanges are losing lines and decreasing in density.

15

16 **Q. Please discuss the comparability of Qwest's rates.**

17 A. The current rate for residential service was set several years ago and it is not
18 unreasonable for Qwest to seek to adjust the rate to more appropriately meet today's
19 conditions.

20

⁵⁰ The Annual Report on the Status of the Telecommunications Industry, Presented to the Washington State Legislature, by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, January 12, 1987, page 77.

⁵¹ See, The Annual Report on the Status of the Washington Telecommunications Industry, Presented to the Legislature January 12, 1987, by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, page 73.

1 Qwest's current standalone residential rate of \$12.50 per line per month is already
2 considered to be comparable to other companies' prices for purposes of comparing
3 rural and urban rates.⁵² Furthermore, Exhibit ___ (TLW-6) shows that Qwest's rate
4 of \$12.50 is less than the average rate of \$13.90 for all other ILECs in the state. Even
5 if the commission were to grant Qwest's AFOR proposal and if Qwest were to avail
6 itself of the opportunity to raise residential rates as described, the resulting rate in
7 four years would still be within the range of rates determined by this commission to
8 be fair, just and reasonable for other ILECs, given that the current range is from a
9 maximum of \$26.00 to a minimum of \$8.47. It is also worth noting that Verizon was
10 granted a rate increase in its last rate case, increasing its residential rate to \$15.43,
11 and that rate will go up again in July 2007, to \$16.90. Qwest's proposal would still
12 result in a rate less than the next largest ILEC in the state.

13
14 GEOGRAPHIC DE-AVERAGING

15 **Q. Please discuss and analyze the four-year transition period provision prohibiting**
16 **Qwest from geographically de-averaging rates for digital business services,**
17 **analog private line services, and residential exchange service features and**
18 **packages although the latter set will be treated as competitively classified**
19 **services.**

⁵² See September 13, 2006 letter to the FCC from Carole Washburn, the commission's executive secretary, in Docket UT-063064, in the matter of Embarq, Qwest, and Verizon, certifying the comparability of urban rates nationwide to residential rates in rural areas of the state served by non-rural ILECs (Qwest is such a carrier and its residential rate is the same in urban and rural areas).

1 A. This is a critical condition necessary for approval of the AFOR. It will prevent the
2 company from exercising market power over customers who do not enjoy the
3 benefits of effective competition in rural, underserved and high-cost areas.

4

5 **Q. Is line loss more intense in urban areas or business markets as compared to**
6 **rural areas and residential markets?**

7 A. Not necessarily. Based upon Qwest line loss data, there is increasing competitive
8 opportunity in almost all markets for almost all services. In my testimony I look at
9 Qwest's operations on the basis of access lines per square mile. Density of access
10 lines is an important economic indicator of the cost of providing service.

11 Competition for telecommunications typically follows where economies of scale are
12 the greatest and where technological advances have been deployed. This is why
13 competition occurred first in the long distance industry, and then in the competitive
14 access provider industry, as the advantages of fiber optic transmission and traffic
15 aggregation took place. With advances in switching technology competitors began to
16 target the local exchange. But like miners in a gold rush, competitors staked out the
17 most lucrative claims first. So competition occurred first in high-volume, densely
18 packed areas where economies of scale and technological advances create the biggest
19 advantage. As time has passed, additional advances in wireless and Internet-based,
20 non-circuit-switched technologies have taken place and today competition is
21 occurring to a greater degree than ever before.

22

1 My analysis, in Exhibit ____ -C (TLW-5-C) and the data in Qwest witness Tietzel's
2 Exhibit ____ -C (DLT-2-C) reveals that about 38.8 percent of Qwest exchanges are
3 urban. Access line densities in 2006 range from a high of 2,621 access lines per
4 square mile in the most densely populated exchange, Seattle, to a low of two access
5 lines per square mile in Pomeroy, with a statewide estimated average in 2006 of 150
6 access lines per square mile.

7
8 I also analyze the exchanges based upon the change in access line density from 2000
9 to 2006. Page 2 of Exhibit ____ -C (TLW-5-C) sorts the exchanges on the basis of the
10 percent change (percent line loss is the same thing mathematically) in access line
11 density to reveal that while Qwest is certainly losing substantial numbers of lines in
12 urban (shaded grey) exchanges, it is also losing lines (and access line density) in
13 many rural exchanges (as much as an estimated 28.9 percent in [REDACTED]).

14
15 This information shows that left unfettered, Qwest has a strong incentive to de-
16 average rates across its territory to more effectively reflect economies of scale in
17 rural and urban areas. This is why staff considers of critical importance and
18 significance the prohibition in the AFOR plan on geographically de-averaged rates
19 for standalone residential services and for various business services in parts of the
20 state where there remain vestiges of market power as determined by the
21 commission's review and disposition of competitive classification petitions.

22

1 Under this provision of the plan, if Qwest responds to competition in urban areas
2 with price decreases, then it must also reduce rates for rural subscribers. Conversely,
3 if Qwest increases prices in rural areas to cover cost, then it must likewise increase
4 rates in urban areas proportionately. This condition assures that all boats will rise
5 with the tide and rural, high-cost, low-demand consumers will benefit from the
6 welfare producing effects of competition.

7

8 STREAMLINED ACCOUNTING

9 **Q. Qwest proposes to be relieved from keeping a separate set of accounting records**
10 **for purposes of compliance with commission-basis rules and adjustments, with**
11 **some modifications. Please analyze this proposal.**

12

13 A. Qwest's proposal should be partially granted by implementing staff's
14 recommendations instead. Please see the testimony of staff witness Paula Strain for
15 details. Staff's improved plan allows for finance, accounting, reporting and record-
16 keeping to assure the commission can consider whether rates and charges will be
17 fair, just and reasonable under the plan.

18

19 WAC 480-120-355 allows competitively classified telecommunications companies
20 to follow generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) rules, which do not
21 require jurisdictional separations procedures to prevent regulated monopolies from
22 inappropriately justifying rates to recover interstate or deregulated expenses or shift
23 profits. In contrast, commission rules for Qwest require accounting records to allow

1 the commission to readily determine intrastate operations revenues, investments, and
2 expenses for ratemaking purposes.

3

4 Qwest proposes to no longer maintain a second set of “state” books but instead keep
5 its accounts pursuant to the FCC’s accounting rules. Nevertheless, Qwest is still
6 subject on the interstate side to the FCC’s current rules defining the USOA.

7

8 **Q. Qwest is requesting relief from various financial reporting requirements. Please**
9 **discuss this proposal.**

10 A. Qwest’s proposals for streamlined financial oversight are, for the most part,
11 acceptable, subject to a few modifications (see the testimony of staff witness Paula
12 Strain). Qwest would file its annual financial report pursuant to WAC 480-120-382,
13 based on its books of account kept for FCC reporting purposes (MR books) in
14 accordance with the Uniform System of Accounts (“USOA”), Part 32, as specified in
15 WAC 480-120-359 (1)(a), except that the effective date for Part 32 would be as
16 currently promulgated, not the date specified in WAC 480-120-999 (4)(a). Qwest’s
17 annual report would also include a directory revenue credit in the amount specified
18 by the settlement agreement the Commission approved in the Dex case. Qwest
19 would also include the credits to its depreciation reserve required for a prior sale of
20 rural exchanges and for sharing under a prior AFOR. Finally, Qwest would include
21 a standing adjustment reflecting the difference in rate base between its MR books
22 and its Washington jurisdictional books of account (JR books) on the date of
23 transition from JR books to MR books. Please see the testimony of staff witness

1 Paula Strain for a complete and detailed review of Qwest’s accounting and reporting
2 proposal and of staff’s recommended improvements. Under its proposal, Qwest
3 would no longer file quarterly financial reports as required in WAC 480-120-385(2).
4

5 **Q. Qwest proposes to remain subject to commission review and oversight if it sells**
6 **or merges the company, and to continue following the cash transfer rule**
7 **requirements subject to the outcome of the appeal in court. Please analyze this**
8 **arrangement.**

9 A. Staff recommends Qwest continue to be subject to commission oversight and review.
10 Please see the testimony of staff witness Deborah Reynolds for more detailed
11 discussion of this issue.
12

13 **CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE AFOR, WITH SPECIFIC ATTENTION TO**
14 **STATUTORY GOALS AND CONSIDERATIONS**
15

16 **Universal Service**

17 **Q. Please discuss the AFOR and the goal of preserving affordable universal**
18 **telecommunications service.**

19 A. Qwest’s plan preserves affordable universal telecommunications service, but staff
20 recommends improving the plan by adding a free directory assistance call allowance.
21 Staff takes into consideration the relatively high penetration rate in Washington, and
22 the fact that the plan leaves WTAP, Link-up and Tribal subsidies the subject of full
23 tariff review by the commission. Although rate increases could result under the plan
24 for standalone residential subscribers, the lifeline provisions will protect consumers

1 from adverse effects on universal service. The “take rate” for WTAP remains
2 relatively low.

3

4 By keeping basic residential service in the tariff and by making any changes subject
5 to commission approval, line extension charges and extended area service are also
6 protected to preserve affordable universal service. The FCC’s 2006 Reference Book
7 of Rates, Price Indices, and Household Expenditures for Telephone Service by the
8 Industry Analysis and Technology Division of the Wireline Competition Bureau
9 shows that the national average charge for flat rate service is \$14.75. The highest
10 possible comparable rate under the plan for Qwest’s standalone residential
11 subscribers in Washington would be less than that at \$14.50. Therefore the plan
12 preserves affordable universal telecommunications service.⁵³ Most recently, on
13 September 13, 2006, the commission wrote the Universal Service Administrative
14 Company (USAC) to certify that the commission has reviewed the comparability of
15 urban rates nationwide to residential rates in rural areas of the state served by non-
16 rural incumbent local exchange carriers (including Qwest), and certified that the
17 rates are comparable for purposes of Section 254(b)(3) of the Telecommunications
18 Act of 1996.⁵⁴ Since the plan provides rates that satisfy these criteria, then it
19 preserves affordable universal telecommunications service.

⁵³ See Table 1.1 of the report. http://hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-266857A1.pdf

⁵⁴ Consumers in all regions of the Nation, including low-income consumers and those in rural, insular, and high cost areas, should have access to telecommunications and information services, including interexchange services and advanced telecommunications and information services, that are reasonably comparable to those services provided in urban areas and that are available at rates that are reasonably comparable to rates charged for similar services in urban areas.

1

2 **An Efficient, Robust Backbone**

3 **Q. Does the plan maintain and advance the efficiency and availability of**
4 **telecommunications service?**

5 A. Qwest's plan is deficient in this regard, although Qwest's arguments tend to be
6 persuasive that competitive forces will provide guidance on Qwest investment
7 decisions. Thus, the AFOR might have some positive effect. In order to design an
8 appropriate AFOR for Qwest under the conditions Qwest is facing, the commission
9 has to take into account that Qwest is under competitive assault and Qwest alone is
10 best able to decide where it can make investments that will maintain and advance the
11 efficiency of service as well as make profit. In order to pursue statutory goals, it is
12 important to keep in mind the asymmetry of information and the overall complexity
13 of regulation in the face of competition.

14

15 **Q. Please describe the staff's recommendations for improvements to the plan to**
16 **provide for additional efficiency and availability of services.**

17 A. Staff recommends that in two years, Qwest should provide a plan for infrastructure
18 development. At the end of the AFOR, for the review process, Qwest should file a
19 report on infrastructure development informing the commission about Qwest's
20 progress in promoting the infrastructure plan. Additionally, any time there is a major
21 outage in a given area with a cause that is within Qwest's control, and that affects the
22 availability of advanced telecommunications services, the company must build in
23 either more redundancy to serve that area or a technological improvement that

1 removes the vulnerability that caused the outage (*see* testimony of staff witness
2 Deborah Reynolds).

3

4 **Q. If Qwest is under competitive assault for lines on the intrastate side of its
5 business, is it not true that Qwest is making up the difference by selling xDSL
6 services on the interstate side?**

7 A. No. Qwest is not making up for lost lines on the intrastate side by adding xDSL lines
8 on the interstate side. Qwest lost [REDACTED] residential, business, and payphone lines
9 from 2000 – 2006, as shown on page 2 of Exhibit ___ - C (TLW – 5C). On page 2 of
10 Exhibit ___ - C (TLW-7-C) it shows that Qwest only added an estimated [REDACTED]
11 xDSL lines during that period. Therefore, Qwest did not add enough xDSL lines to
12 make up for the loss in intrastate lines during 2000 – 2006.

13

14 **Protecting Against Cross Subsidy**

15 **Q. Does the plan ensure that rates for noncompetitive telecommunications services
16 will not subsidize Qwest’s competitive ventures?**

17 A. Yes. Staff has reviewed Qwest’s results of operations and done “what-if” analyses to
18 respond to this question. Please see the testimony of staff witness Paula Strain for
19 information about Qwest’s financial results. In addition, inferences can be drawn
20 from my analysis of economies of scale and hypothetical revenues in Exhibit ___-C
21 (TLW-4-C), which provides information concerning the effects of cross-subsidy and
22 line losses on Qwest.

23

1 Furthermore, financial, accounting, reporting, and record-keeping provisions and
2 elements of current regulation not impacted by the petition would remain subject to
3 the *status quo*, including all orders and rules governing wholesale arrangements. This
4 would mean, for example, that Qwest would be subject to the requirement to sell
5 unbundled network elements at TELRIC. TELRIC serves as an appropriate
6 imputation floor for Qwest retail pricing and will be readily available to the
7 commission during the plan. There are also still normal prohibitions against pricing
8 below cost in RCW 80.36.300(4)⁵⁵ and RCW 80.36.330(6).⁵⁶
9
10

⁵⁵ [e]nsuring that rates for noncompetitive telecommunications services do not subsidize the competitive ventures of regulated telecommunications companies.

⁵⁶ [n]o losses incurred by a telecommunications company in the provision of competitive services may be recovered through rates for noncompetitive services. The commission may order refunds or credits to any class of subscribers to a noncompetitive telecommunications service which has paid excessive rates because of below cost pricing of competitive telecommunications services.

1 **Diversity of Supply**

2 **Q. Please discuss whether the plan promotes diversity in the supply of**
3 **telecommunications services and products in Washington.**

4 A. The staff’s recommendations addressing this statutory goal require Qwest to study
5 the problem and report to the commission. The plan also contains a requirement to
6 improve the efficiency and availability of services whenever there are lessons to be
7 learned and opportunities for improvement.

8
9 Staff bases its analysis of this issue primarily upon DSL data as a proxy for
10 information concerning the availability of advanced services. Qwest’s Response to
11 Public Counsel Data Request 6.b. shows that in 2000, ■ Qwest wire centers did not
12 have DSL available, but in 2006 all but ■ low-density rural wire centers have
13 DSL available. Qwest has added ■ more residential DSL subscribers and
14 ■ business DSL customers for a total of over ■ new DSL subscribers
15 since 2000. By granting Qwest streamlined oversight and added flexibility, subject to
16 an informative reporting requirement at the end of the AFOR, the commission will
17 have considered whether the plan will promote the diversity in the supply of services
18 and products.

19
20 Economies of access line density, inflation, and technological advances are all
21 extremely difficult problems for Qwest and the commission to solve in designing an
22 AFOR to promote or advance the diversity and availability of advanced services. As
23 shown in Exhibit ___ - C (TLW-5-C) on page 3, access line density in Qwest

1 territory was 1,480 access lines per square mile in 1985, which the company may
2 have felt were the halcyon days of near monopoly. Today access line density is less
3 than a fourth what it was then. Today Qwest only has an average of 261 lines per
4 square mile from which to derive economies of scale.

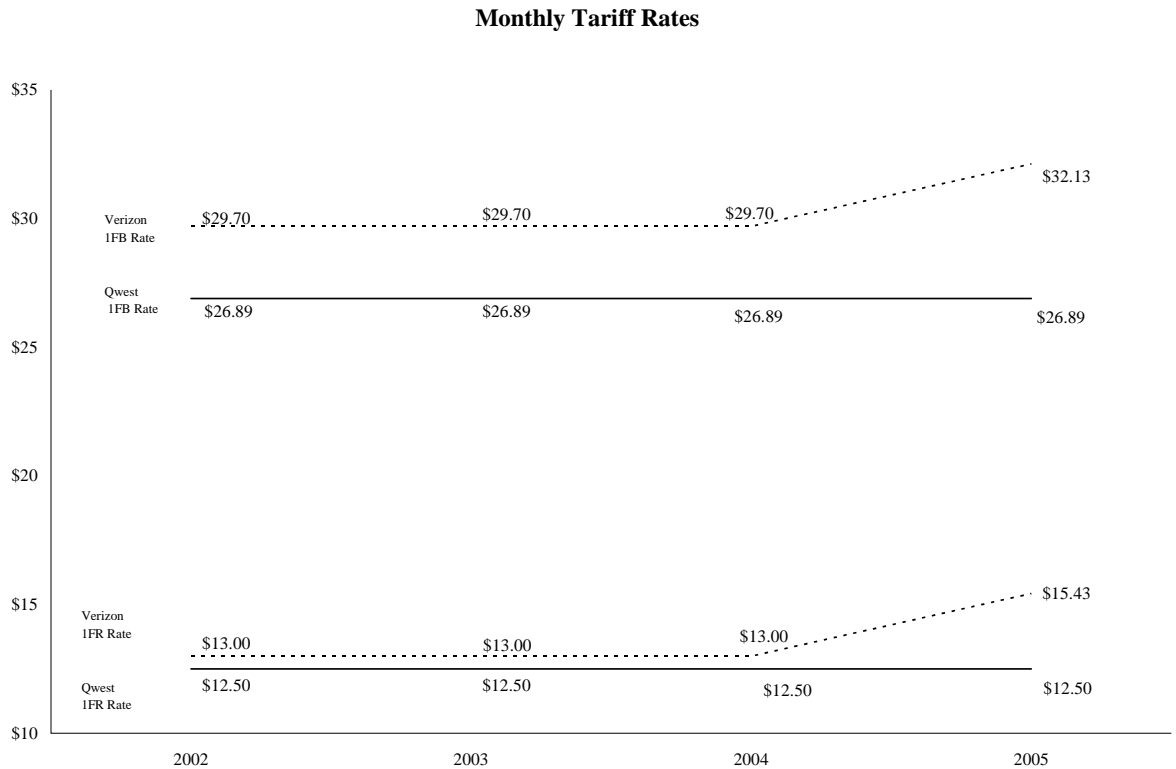
5
6 Economies of scale in Seattle have changed drastically as access line density fell for
7 Qwest by 32 percent over the past six years. That is very significant because Seattle
8 is supposed to be Qwest's most densely populated exchange, where the potential to
9 earn profits is very important if rural areas are to continue to receive extra support, as
10 illustrated in Exhibit ___ -C (TLW-5-C) and the hypothetical rate analysis in Exhibit
11 ___ - C (TLW-4-C).

12
13 Evidence of the harsh transition from monopoly to competition is also reflected in
14 the figures for rate base per line. Adjusted for an inflation multiplier of 3.2 from
15 1984 to 2006, the Company's rate base per line has plummeted from \$1,244 in 1985
16 to just over \$250 per line today (expressed in 1984 dollars). At the same time,
17 adjusting for inflation once again, revenue per access line dropped about 75 percent
18 from \$614 in 1985 to \$150 today (expressed in 1984 dollars).

19
20 Looking at the monthly tariff rates for Qwest and comparing to Verizon in Figure 3,
21 it is apparent that Qwest rates are possibly insufficient to fund new investment when
22 taking into account the difference in average revenue per line shown in Exhibit ____
23 C (TLW-8-C).

1
2

FIGURE 3



3
4

5 **Regulatory Efficiency**

6 **Q. Will the plan improve the efficiency of the regulatory process?**

7 A. It is likely that the plan will improve the efficiency of the regulatory process. A
8 substantial relief of the burden of making filings to react to changing market
9 conditions, and streamlined reporting, will benefit the company.

10

11 In 2006, Qwest made 169 filings before the commission. This included ten affiliated
12 interest filings, 39 special contracts, 20 price lists, and 30 tariff filings. If the staff's

1 improved AFOR plan were in place, the ten affiliated interest filings could have been
2 handled one time in an annual format, rather than ten times on the commission's No
3 Action Agenda. The 39 contract filings would be eliminated under the plan, and 24
4 of the tariff filings would be eliminated (two that would not have been eliminated
5 were promotions for win-back of residential subscribers). Thus, it can be estimated
6 that the improved plan would reduce Qwest filing activity alone by 43 percent in the
7 first year – a potentially substantial increase in regulatory efficiency.

8
9 **More Competition**

10 **Q. Will the plan preserve or enhance the development of effective competition and**
11 **protect against the exercise of market power during its development?**

12 A. Yes. The plan protects competition by maintaining the status quo for all of the
13 market-opening and wholesale provisions under the Telecommunications Act of
14 1996. Competition will be the best discipline to constrain Qwest from exercising
15 market power during its development.

16
17 **Q. What other condition is staff recommending in order for this AFOR to meet the**
18 **statutory goal for competition?**

19 A. Staff recommends that during the four-year AFOR period, Qwest should not seek
20 forbearance for the state of Washington. Staff believes that Qwest should not be
21 relieved of its obligations to provide access to UNEs and to continue its wholesale
22 service measures that are required by Federal statutes and the Triennial Review
23 Remand Order (TRRO) decision.

1

2 **Q. Could you explain why it is important to include this condition in the AFOR**
3 **plan?**

4 A. Yes. In the TRRO, FCC has established standards for non-impairment. For Qwest,
5 this Commission has validated 13 wire centers to meet that standard. For those wire
6 centers, Qwest has no obligation to continue to offer DS1, DS3, and/or dark fiber
7 interoffice transport as UNEs at TELRIC-based prices. CLECs will need to purchase
8 the same services from the Qwest retail tariff. The price differential is large. If
9 Qwest were to file a forbearance petition for the state of Washington that was
10 granted by the FCC, Qwest would be relieved of its obligation to continue to offer
11 these service elements at UNE prices, even in wire centers where Qwest has not met
12 the non-impairment standard.

13

14 **Service Quality**

15 **Q. Please discuss how the plan will preserve or enhance service quality and protect**
16 **against the degradation of the quality or availability of efficient**
17 **telecommunications services.**

18 A. Staff recommends improvements to the plan to provide for improved availability of
19 advanced services, and a more robust backbone. The staff also recommends that
20 Qwest be given the incentive to perform high quality service because potential rate
21 increases will not be permitted unless service quality measures show improvement
22 each year. Existing service quality programs for both wholesale and retail service

1 quality protection and oversight would remain in place under Qwest's proposal and
2 as modified by staff's recommendations for improvement.

3

4 **Fair Rates**

5 **Q. Please discuss the statutory AFOR consideration of whether the plan provides**
6 **for rates and charges that are fair, just, reasonable, sufficient, and not unduly**
7 **discriminatory or preferential.**

8 A. Please see the testimony of staff witness Paula Strain. Under the plan standalone
9 residential rates are subject to a starting point going into the plan, in the form of the
10 existing, commission-approved tariff. Therefore, the beginning rate is fair, just,
11 reasonable, and sufficient. Furthermore, future rate increases to standalone
12 residential rates under the plan will be subject to service quality improvements
13 according to a verifiable service quality index that will give Qwest the incentive to
14 provide good service for a fair price.

15

16 Though not based on rates derived from a full rate case, staff's improved AFOR plan
17 provides for rates and charges that are fair, just and reasonable. Staff's conclusion is
18 based upon comparison to other affordable rates, analysis of TELRIC cost based
19 rates, and rural versus urban implications of economies of scale and a solid review of
20 Qwest's financial and accounting results of operations and its rate of return.

21 The commission does not need to perform a full-scale, fully contested and
22 completely rigorous rate case in order to determine whether the plan provides for
23 fair, just and reasonable rates for purposes of considering this AFOR. For purposes

1 of the AFOR, it is appropriate and sufficient for the commission to review objective,
2 verifiable evidence. It is not necessary for the commission to reach the degree of
3 certainty contemplated by a full-scale rate case. A full rate case requires accurate
4 forecasts of what subsequent rate cases would produce over the period of an AFOR.
5 The changing telecommunications market, increasingly dominated by wireless and
6 other services, makes it difficult to predict local wire line rates for the four years of
7 the AFOR. In addition, even if the AFOR were more expensive to ratepayers in the
8 first (test) year, it could still be less expensive over the duration of the AFOR. The
9 AFOR process is designed to promote telephone utilities' heightened efficiency and
10 innovation in an increasingly competitive industry, ultimately resulting in savings to
11 the ratepayers. To this end, an AFOR remains in effect for a multi-year term during
12 which the telephone utility enjoys the benefit of any cost savings it achieves over and
13 above the savings assumed in the AFOR and the ratepayers enjoy the benefit of
14 being insulated from increased rates resulting from annual rate cases and upward
15 cost fluctuations. The AFOR also decreases regulatory costs by avoiding rate cases
16 that arise under the traditional ratemaking process.

17
18 An AFOR should provide: (1) the price for a service must be as low as possible; (2)
19 it must not be higher than it would be in a rate-base determination; (3) it must be
20 reasonable; (4) it must be sufficient to cover the utility's cost; and (5) it must not be
21 so high that it is a mechanism for transferring the risk of non-local or unregulated
22 business activities. Therefore, the AFOR encourages increased efficiency by
23 permitting the telephone utility to reap at least some of the benefit of its innovations

1 and heightened efficiency. The staff's improved AFOR does require an analysis of
2 the linkage between rates and costs. The comparison of rates is required before the
3 commission adopts an AFOR except in the most extraordinary of circumstances,
4 when dispensing with the comparison would be in the ratepayers' best interests. The
5 existence of such circumstances has not yet been demonstrated on the present record
6 in this case.

7
8 **Q. Will the plan unduly or unreasonably prejudice or disadvantage any particular**
9 **customer class?**

10 A. The plan is designed to avoid this problem, particularly with regard to rural versus
11 urban distinctions. Staff's plan does not unduly or unreasonably prejudice or
12 disadvantage any particular customer class. The plan protects customers subject to
13 vestiges of market power by placing such services under full commission oversight
14 and discretion. In addition, a discriminatory pricing scheme is only feasible when the
15 producer has sufficient market power to be able to create separate classes of
16 customers between which it will discriminate. The discrimination scheme would then
17 be to offer different rates, terms, or conditions to one group than the other. If the
18 different customer classes are able to find substitutes or alternatives to the
19 discriminatory service, that is to say, violate the discriminatory customer class
20 distinctions, then the discriminatory scheme does not succeed. With the existence of
21 competition, Qwest will be hard pressed to maintain a discriminatory scheme
22 because customers will find that Qwest does not have the market power to prevent

1 customers from choosing alternatives that violate that scheme. Please see my
2 analysis of the prohibition on geographic de-averaging.

3

4 **Federalism**

5 **Q. Does staff have any other over-all policy observations concerning this matter?**

6 A. Yes. Staff also notes that the improved plan comports well with the NARUC
7 Legislative Task Force Report on Federalism and Telecom, July 2005. It recognizes
8 the changes taking place in the industry, and focuses on core public interests and
9 relative strengths of the state commission – local rates, low income, high-cost and
10 special interests, service quality, consumer protection, and local markets subject to
11 market power.

12

13 **Q. Does this conclude your testimony?**

14 A. Yes.

GLOSSARY OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS TERMS
Docket UT-061625

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Access	A local carrier must allow customers access to their preferred long-distance carrier. Customers pay an access charge to their local carrier for access to their long distance carrier and long distance carriers pay access charges to the local carrier to connect to the local carrier's network. <i>(From Newton's Telecom Dictionary, at pages 26-27.)</i>
Access line	A telephone line from a central office to the local premises. <i>See also local loop. (From Newton's Telecom Dictionary, at page 27.)</i>
Advanced Services	The availability of high-speed, switched, broadband telecommunications that enable users to originate and receive high-quality voice, data, graphics, and video using any technology.
AFOR	Alternative form of regulation
ARMIS	Automated Reporting Management Information System. The FCC's database of telecommunication carriers' network, financial and service quality data. Carriers update the information annually on April 1.
Basic service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-party service; Voice grade access to the public switched network; Support for local usage; touch-tone; Access to emergency services (E911); Access to operator services; Access to interexchange services; Access to directory assistance; and Toll limitation services.
Broadband	Advanced communications systems capable of providing high-speed transmission of services such as data, voice, and video over the Internet and other networks delivered by various technologies such as digital subscriber line and fiber optic cable, coaxial cable, wireless technology, and satellite.
Business line	A loop or line used for business purposes, i.e., not a residential line.
Central Office	A building where the local loops are connected to switches to allow connection to other customers; also referred to as a wire center where there are several switches functioning as a switch exchange. <i>(From Newton's Telecom Dictionary, at page 157.)</i> A company facility that houses the switching and trunking equipment serving a defined area.
Centrex	A telecommunications service providing a customer with direct inward dialing to telephone extensions and direct outward dialing

TERM	DESCRIPTION
	from them.
Class A company	A local exchange company with two percent or more of the access lines within the state of Washington. The method of determining whether a company is a Class A company is specified in WAC 480-120-034 (Classification of local exchange companies as Class A or Class B).
Class B company	A local exchange company with less than two percent of the access lines within the state of Washington. The method of determining whether a company is a Class B company is specified in WAC 480-120-034 (Classification of local exchange companies as Class A or Class B).
Circuit	“The physical connection (or) path of channels, conductors and equipment between two given points through which an electric current may be established.” <i>(From Newton’s Telecom Dictionary, at page 167.)</i>
CLEC	Competitive local exchange company. A company competing with an incumbent local exchange company (ILEC) for local service customers; generally subject to limited regulation.
Collocation/ Collocator	Collocation occurs when a competing local carrier locates its switches within another local exchange carrier’s central office. A collocator is a carrier that collocates its switches in another carrier’s central office. <i>(From Newton’s Telecom Dictionary, at page 182.)</i>
Dedicated transport	Facilities dedicated to a particular competitive carrier that the carrier uses for transmission between or among ILEC central offices and tandem switching offices, and to connect its local network to the ILEC’s network. <i>(TRRO, ¶ 67)</i>
DSL	Digital Subscriber Line – high speed data and voice.
DS0 / Voice grade	The digital representation of the capacity of an analog voice channel, <i>i.e.</i> , the traditional copper pair loop, transmitting information at 64 kilobytes per second (kbps). <i>(TRO, n. 634)</i>
DS1	The initial level of multiplexing in the time division hierarchy of the telephone network; a 1.544 megabytes per second (Mbps) signal that provides the equivalent of 24 64 kbps DSO channels . The same as a T1 facility. <i>(TRO, n. 634)</i>
DS3	A digital local loop having a total digital signal speed of 44.736 Mbps provided over various transmission media, including, but not limited to fiber optics, coaxial cable, or radio. DS3 loops can be

TERM	DESCRIPTION
	channelized into 28 DS1 channels , or unchannelized to provide a continuous bit stream for data. (<i>TRO, n. 634</i>)
EAS	Extended area service. Telephone service extending beyond a customer's exchange, for which the customer may pay an additional flat-rate amount per month.
High-capacity	High-capacity refers to the ability of the facility to handle a large amount of traffic or information at a single time, e.g., DS1, DS3, OCn capacity.
ILEC	Incumbent local exchange company. A local exchange company in operation at the time the Act was enacted (August 1996).
Interconnection	Connection between facilities or equipment of a telecommunications carrier with a local exchange carrier's network under Section 251(c)(2).
Interconnection Agreement	An agreement between an ILEC and requesting telecommunications carrier (which may be a CLEC) addressing terms, conditions and prices for interconnection, services or network elements pursuant to Section 251.
IntraLATA	A term used to describe services, revenues, functions, etc., that relate to telecommunications that originate and terminate within the same LATA.
JR	Jurisdictional Reporting - the term that Qwest uses to describe accounting and reporting that follows Washington rules and orders.
kbps	kilobytes per second
LATA	Local Access Transport Area - defined by the commission in conformance with applicable federal law at the break up of the Bell system ,to define the boundaries beyond which Bell companies were not permitted to transport toll calls.
Local exchange	A geographic area consisting of one or more central offices. (<i>From Newton's Telecom Dictionary, at page 301.</i>) A geographic area established by a company for telecommunications service within that area.
Loop	The local loop. The copper wire, fiber, or cable serving a particular customer, generally running from a central office to a residence or building.
Mbps	Megabytes per second; synonymous with MEG

TERM	DESCRIPTION
MR	“Management Reporting” - term used by Qwest to describe its books of account kept for FCC reporting purposes
Network element	A facility or equipment used in providing telecommunications services.
Non-impaired	A term relating to whether a competing carrier has access to unbundled network elements. Under Section 251(d)(2), an ILEC must provide unbundled access to an element if failure to provide the element would impair the carrier’s ability to provide service. Under the TRRO, the FCC determined that competing carriers are not impaired under Section 251(d)(2) without unbundled access to high-capacity elements at a wire center if the wire center meets certain criteria. If a wire center meets the criteria, it is designated non-impaired , meaning competitors are not allowed unbundled access to high-capacity loops and transport in the wire center.
OCn	OCn (OC is Optical Channel) is an optical interface designed to work with a Synchronous Optical Network (SONET). OCn transmission facilities are deployed as SONET channels having a bandwidth of typically 155.52 Mbps (megabytes per second)(OC3) or higher. (<i>TRO, n. 631</i>).
OSS	Operations Support Systems - Ordering and Provisioning, Repair and Maintenance, and Billing.
Part 32	The section of federal law (Code of Federal Regulations, Title 47, Part 32) setting forth the Uniform System of Accounts for telecommunications companies
QPAP	Qwest Performance Assurance Plan – OSS monitoring and compliance activity provides penalty payments to CLECs for OSS wholesale functions rendered at less than parity with Qwest’s own retail service performance.
ROR	Rate of Return Regulation
RORB	Return on Rate Base – the overall rate of return, including cost of debt and return on equity.
Residential line	A loop or line connecting a residence; used generally for residential, rather than business, purposes.
Section 251(c)(3)	The section of the Act that requires ILECs to provide competing carriers with access to network elements on an unbundled or individual basis. The unbundled elements provided under this

TERM	DESCRIPTION
	section are known as UNEs.
SFY	State Fiscal Year
Switched access	The connection between a customer's phone and a long distance carrier's switch when making a local or long distance call over standard telephone lines. (<i>From Newton's Telecom Dictionary, at page 756.</i>)
TELRIC	Total Element Long Run Incremental Cost. A method of determining the cost, and prices for network elements using a forward-looking process, rather than the existing network of a carrier. Generally, the pricing methodology for UNEs.
TRO	The FCC's Triennial Review Order. August 2003 order addressing UNEs and the impairment standard for UNEs, vacated in part and remanded in part by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals in <i>USTA II v. FCC</i> .
TRRO	The FCC's Triennial Review Remand Order. March 2005 order entered in response to D.C. Circuit's <i>USTA II</i> decision: Eliminates local switching as a UNE as of March 11, 2006, and limits unbundling of high-capacity transport and loops.
Transport	Lines or connections used to transmit voice or data through a carrier's network. Transport media include copper wire, fiber optics, microwave, or satellite. (<i>From Newton's Telecom Dictionary, at page 815.</i>) See dedicated transport.
Trunk, Also trunked transport	A communication line between two switching systems. A single trunk, capable of carrying a single conversation, is referred to DS0.
Unbundled	A network element that is provided by itself, not in connection with or "bundled" with another network element. A means for a carrier to request particular services from an ILEC to customize the service the carrier provides, without having to accept a package of elements and services that the carrier must take as an all or nothing option.
UNE	Unbundled network element. Generally a network element an ILEC must make available under Section 251(c)(3) of the Act.
UNE-P, also UNE-P line	Unbundled Network Element Platform, or a combination of local loops, switching and transport offered by the ILEC.
UNE-loop, or UNE-L	Unbundled network element loop, or a stand-alone loop provided without the combination of switching and transport provided via

TERM	DESCRIPTION
	UNE-P.
USOA	Uniform System of Accounts
Wire center	The location where a telephone company terminates and switches local lines, or loops. A wire center may have one or more class 5 central offices or exchanges. <i>(From Newton's Telecom Dictionary, at page 884.)</i>
WTAP	Washington Telephone Assistance Program.
xDSL	Digital Subscriber Line service at the following speeds: 256K, 1.5MEG, 3MEG, 5MEG, 7MEG.

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