

Via Facsimile and Electronic Mail

7 May 2001

Ms. Carole J. Washburn
Secretary
Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission
1300 South Evergreen Park Drive, S.W.
Olympia, Washington 98504

RE: Cessation of Certain Telecommunications Services, WAC 480-120-083, Docket No. UT-010558

Dear Ms. Washburn:

The Association of Communications Enterprises (ASCENT) on behalf of its over 700 members and pursuant to the Washington Utility and Transportation Commission's April 30, 2001 *Notice of Rulemaking Workshop* inviting interested party comments in the above-referenced proceeding, files this letter in lieu of comments regarding the Commission's proposed emergency rules governing notice of cessation of certain telecommunications services. ASCENT is sympathetic to the Commission's desire to ensure adequate customer notice of the termination of local, private branch exchange, Centrex, and private line services, and does not oppose in concept the Commission's proposed rule. ASCENT does, however, oppose as unnecessary, redundant, and costly, the requirement that companies provide oral, as well as written notice of service terminations.¹ The oral notice provision should be eliminated.

The Commission already proposes requiring companies to provide written notice of the cessation of certain telecommunications services at least 30 days prior to the time the company ceases providing the service.² The written notice must include, among other things, a company number which the customer may call to request further information.³ This written notice is sufficient to provide end users notice that a service will cease to be provided. Yet the Commission also requires companies to call each and every customer to provide oral notice of the service cessation five to seven days prior to cessation of the service in question. The company must attempt to reach each customer at least twice, at different times of the day.⁴ Not only is such notice redundant and unnecessary, in

¹ "Between seven and five business days before ceasing a covered services, a company must provide oral notice to each remaining customer..." WAC 480-12-083(3).

² WAC 480-12-083(2)

³ WAC 480-12-083(2)(b)

⁴ WAC 480-12-083(3).

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light of the previous written communication received by the customer, but compliance with the notice provision will be unreasonably expensive, particularly for smaller telecommunications service providers, such as many ASCENT members.

For example, if a service provider has a customer base of 500 end users, and is unable to reach half of those end users during the first round of notification calls, the company would be forced to make a total of 750 calls to comply with the Commission's proposed oral notice requirement. If each of these calls takes an average of three minutes to complete, the company will have spent 2,250 minutes, or a total of 37 hours—nearly an entire work week for one employee—to comply with the Commission's notice provision. Depriving a company of an employee for a whole work week, or multiple employees for a portion of a week to reiterate that the company will cease providing a service in Washington imposes an unnecessary burden on companies that are trying to meet other customer needs.

The written notice requirements contained in the Commission's proposed emergency rules should be deemed sufficient to provide customers with notice of service cessation or termination. Customers who desire more information regarding a carrier's cessation of service may contact the company utilizing the telephone number provided for that purpose in the carrier's written notice of service termination, as already envisioned in WAC 480-12-083(2)(b).

The proposed written notice requirements in WAC 480-12-083(2) of the Commission's proposed termination of service rules already serve to adequately inform customers of a company's intention to cease service provision. Further oral notice requirements are unnecessary, and should be eliminated in their entirety.

Sincerely,

Association of Communications Enterprises

Andrew O. Isar
Director—State Affairs
Dena Alo-Colbeck, Esq.