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Utilities and Transportation Commission
Chandler Plaza Building
FY-11
1300 S. Evergreen Park Drive, S.W.
Olympia, WA 98504

To Whom It May Concern:

I understand that you are considering making it easier for pay phone users to use the long distance company of their choice. I wholeheartedly support this move for the consumer.

I have had several unpleasant experiences with alternative operator services (AOS) due to unwillingness to connect me with AT&T and surprise high charges on my bill, but my latest experience should help illustrate why a person's right to choose should be extended to long distance companies and operator services.

On Sunday, August 5, I went hiking between North Bend and Snoqualmie Pass to a place called McClellan's Butte. It was a difficult hike, especially since one of my boot soles came off at the beginning of my steep 2600 foot descent. This caused my descent to take much longer than anticipated. Since it was almost totally dark by the time I got to my car, and it was my first time on this mountain, I knew my wife would be very concerned about my safety.

At approximately 9:00 p.m., I started attempting to contact my wife in Redmond. I tried to place an AT&T credit card call from a Dairy Queen pay phone, (206)888-4751. An ITI operator answered and I asked to be connected to an AT&T or telephone company operator. She tried to convince me to use ITI but I insisted she transfer me. She finally relented, and I was transferred to an announcement that the call could not be completed as dialed. Frustrated, I tried again. The next ITI operator did the same thing with the same result. I tried one more time. Same result. I then called back and asked to talk to a supervisor. Allison came on the line, and I explained to her what happened, the urgency of my situation, and could she please get me through to an AT&T or telephone company operator. She replied that there is

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usually no problem with the transfer (I knew better because of previous experiences that night and on other occasions) and that maybe she should turn in a repair ticket with AT&T. I suggested she do so. (It would be interesting to see if that was actually done.) She then asked if she could try connecting me to AT&T. By now, I was extremely upset and knowing the same thing would probably happen, I declined and hung up, at wit's end.

I then went to the Chevron station across the street and encountered two "Fone America" phones (888-5625 was the one I attempted to use). This operator also pitched his service to me but I said I wanted to use an AT&T or telephone company operator. He said I should be able to use an AT&T access code. I tried it at the neighboring phone but it wouldn't work (either because North Bend is not equal access or the phone was blocked from using 10288). He then connected me to another announcement that the call could not be completed as dialed.

Thinking by now my wife was about to call out a search party, I went to the Exxon station. These phones (888-2628 and 888-9510) were also "Fone America". My only option left was to persuade the desk clerks there to use their phone to call home. Thank goodness I could finally access a telephone company operator.

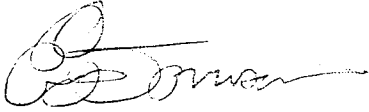
Why didn't I go ahead and use an AOS in this stressful situation? Three reasons. First, I kept thinking the next call would go through. Second, I've been burned by AOS's enough times that I have vowed never to use them again. Third, it's the principle of being free to choose who I want to use.

I know this was a long story but I hope I was able to communicate to you the frustration and near panic I felt that night because these AOS's could not or would not connect me to the long distance company of my choice.

We consumers should be able to use the long distance company we choose from any phone and at no charge. If this hurts the AOS companies' revenue, so be it. This would mean they don't provide a good value for the user, and they'd better become competitive if they want to stay in business. If they cannot or will not become price competitive, maybe they shouldn't have gotten in this business in the first place.

Freedom of choice for us will enable each of us to use the long distance company we choose and will give us the ability to get through to our intended destinations during emergencies and, in my case, stop emergencies before they happen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Eric Torrison".

Eric Torrison

cc: Federal Communications Commission
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