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CC Docket No. 96-98

Implementation of the Local Competition Provisions in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 ROOM

Comments to The Federal Communications Commission regarding the regulations for the Telecommunications Act of 1995.

**On Behalf of the DeSoto County, Mississippi,
Economic Development Council**

Summary

DeSoto County, Mississippi residents experience significant problems by not being able to directly dial other portions of the County. Citizens in the western portion of the County have local dial service to portions of Arkansas and Tennessee but do not have direct local dial service to the County Courthouse some 8 miles away. Many citizens must dial long distance to reach their office from their homes and to reach medical and other needed services. Some have to call long distance to reach their neighbor across the street. Students in Olive Branch schools, in the eastern portion of the County experience difficulties in calling their parents during illness or emergency situations because it is a long distance call.

We understand that the Telecommunications Act of 1996 will encourage competition and allow telecommunications companies to provide improved service in situations like those of DeSoto County. **We encourage the FCC to prepare regulations that will provide modern local dial telephone service among all our citizens and to Memphis.**

DeSoto County

DeSoto County is Mississippi's most northwestern County. The County is 485 square miles or 288,077 acres. DeSoto County's western border is the Mississippi River and the northern border is the Mississippi-Tennessee state line. DeSoto County was formed from Chickasaw Indian lands obtained through the treaty of Pontotoc in 1832. It was named for Hernando DeSoto who first discovered the Mississippi River within its boundaries. The formal organization of the County was completed in 1836 by an act of the legislature.

DeSoto County is one of the fastest growing in the mid south area. There is a wide range of social, religious, and community activities in this area, in addition to an abundance of recreational, outdoor facilities. Education is a strong part of the community with approximately 14,000 students enrolled in the County school system, and higher education opportunities available through a state community college and university.

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With the growth of the community, DeSoto County has remarkably met the needs of those moving into the County through new residential neighborhoods and apartment complexes. Medical and dental facilities are expanding, in addition to many other facilities concerned with physical and mental health care.

Community services, education, recreation, and the largest residential areas in the state provide DeSoto County's reputation as an inviting mid south area. The attributes of DeSoto County encourage newcomers to visit; the warm hospitality of the people is one of the reasons they decide to stay! Recognize for yourself the quality of life in DeSoto County, Mississippi.

Community Profile

Population trends 1980-1990

Location	1980	1990	% change
Mississippi	2,520,698	2,573,216	2.1
DeSoto County	53,930	67,910	25.9
Hernando	2,969	3,125	5.3
Horn lake	4,326	9,069	114.1
Memphis, MS	63	70	4.7
Newport	56	35	-37.5
Olive branch	2,067	3,567	72.6
Southaven	16,441	17,949	11.7

Other population figures

Memphis, MSA*	913,472	981,747	7.5
Memphis, TN	646,356	610,337	-5.6
Shelby County, TN	777,113	826,330	6.3

*MSA- Memphis metropolitan statistical area composed of five counties: Shelby, Tipton, and Fayette, TN; Crittenden, AR; and DeSoto, MS.

Future Population Growth

The Memphis Office of Planning and the Corps of Engineers estimates of the population shows tremendous growth occurring in DeSoto County. By 2020, estimates are that the population of DeSoto County will exceed 250,000. With that growth rate, DeSoto County will become the second or third most highly populated area in the State. As such it will become a major economic engine for the entire State. Industrial job creation is expected to expand along with the population. Currently, the civilian labor force in DeSoto County is 40,000. During the calendar year of 1995, just over 1000

new jobs were created in the county. Approximately 59 percent of the current civilian labor force commutes to Shelby County, Tennessee to work each day. With increased opportunities for employment in the county, a greater proportion of the civilian labor force will choose to work in the county.

As the population grows so will the civilian labor force. A population of 250,000 would indicate a labor force of approximately 120,000, or a growth of 300 percent in the next 24 years. The creation of jobs, schools, roads, and other infrastructure to support such growth is absolutely essential. Of the infrastructure needs, telecommunication is one of the most important. In the economy of 2020 good communications facilities will be essential. Maintaining an antiquated system where a citizen in one part of the DeSoto metropolitan area cannot call others without going through a long-distance carrier will seriously hamper our growth and development.

We support opening our county to competition between local exchange carriers. We urge that the Federal Communication Commission prepare regulations to preclude the continued segmentation of our county. We feel that it is unfair to hamper our growth and development because of arbitrary and imaginary lines on a map.