

Ad Hoc Alliance for Public Access to 911

Alliance for Technology Access • Arizona Consumers League • National Consumers League • World Institute on Disability • National Emergency Number Association, California Chapter • Crime Victims United • Justice for Murder Victims • California Cellular Phone Owners Association • Florida Consumer Fraud Watch • Center for Public Interest Law • Consumer Action • Consumer Coalition of California • Consumers First • California Alliance for Consumer Protection • Californians Against Regulatory Excess • The Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ • Utility Consumer Action Network • Children's Advocacy Institute

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November 19, 1997

The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

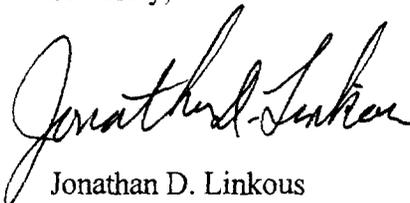
Re: CC Docket No. 94-102

Dear Commissioner Powell:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with members of the Alliance last week. We appreciate your willingness to spend a few moments with us during a very busy week for you.

Following up on our discussions I have included a copy of an editorial appearing in yesterday's Los Angeles Times regarding the strongest signal and other issues we discussed. I am available for any questions you or your staff may have.

Sincerely,



Jonathan D. Linkous

enclosure

cc: Peter A. Tenhula
William Caton, Secretary

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November 19, 1997

The Honorable Susan Ness
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

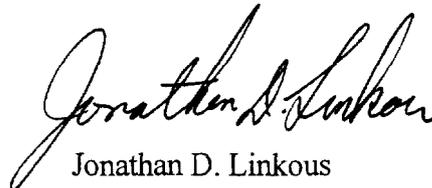
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Jonathan D. Linkous

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cc: David Sidall
William Caton, Secretary

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November 19, 1997

The Honorable Gloria Tristani
Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

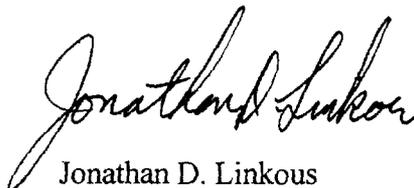
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Jonathan D. Linkous

enclosure

cc: Karen Gulick
William Caton, Secretary

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November 19, 1997

The Honorable William Kennard
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

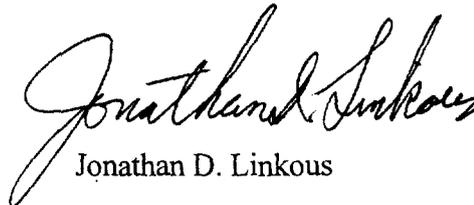
Re: CC Docket No. 94-102

Dear Mr. Chairman:

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Sincerely,



Jonathan D. Linkous

enclosure

cc: Ari Fitzgerald
William Caton, Secretary

parents—will be corrected by legislation that President Clinton plans to sign Wednesday.

The bill will require states to terminate birth parents' custody almost instantly if a child has been seriously abused or, in lesser cases, after the child has spent 15 months in foster care and the parents haven't shaped up. While the legislation recognizes that child safety has to be paramount, it can do little to increase adoptions of abused children. (Of the 100,000 children available nationwide for adoption each year, only 20,000 find families.) So in addition to

riggs is well within our power. But the estimated number of abused and neglected children in this nation increased 149% between 1980 and 1993. There are so many more like Tamika who must first be found.

To Take Action: *Financial contributions may be sent to Keith Village through SHIELDS for Families Inc., Kathy Icenhower, Executive Director, P.O. Box 59129, Los Angeles, Calif. 90059-0313. Take clothing or toys to SHIELDS at 2620 Industry Way, Lynwood, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.*

No Holes When Lives Are at Risk

FCC should ensure that 911 calls on cell phones are put through

Many Americans bought cellular telephones for immediate access to emergency help, but it hasn't always worked out that way.

For instance, your 911 call might not go through if you're in one of your cellular service's weak transmission areas. Yes, every cell phone is equipped with the means to use either of a region's competing cellular signals, but you won't automatically be switched to the stronger one. The companies block that option out of a competitive concern that the opposition might have a better signal in an area that is important to you. And, if you are out of state, your 911 attempt might not go through because you're not a subscriber to the local network.

The Federal Communications Commission is aware of these problems. In June 1996, for example, it approved new rules that required wireless carriers to put 911 calls through whether or not the caller was a local subscriber. But the October start date for compliance now has been pushed back to the end of this month, while the cellular industry argues against the change.

We are talking about emergencies here. There should be no further delays on the new FCC rules. The commission should also force compliance and adopt a rule that allows a 911 caller to be switched automatically to the strongest signal in the area, presuming there is a competing service. That means no more

signal blocking.

Next, cellular phone companies should be required to inform customers of dead or weak signal areas in their service range. That alone should spur competition on improved technology.

The industry is also concerned about losing business if there is a federal rule allowing all cell phone owners to make 911 calls even if they have not subscribed to a cellular service. Well, regular service can be prohibitively expensive and some who own cell phones for security reasons cannot afford to subscribe. If the cell phone companies are concerned about losing subscribers, they ought to think about more competitive pricing. The federal policy of permitting just two cellular companies per service region makes little sense for that very reason. It inhibits competition.

Until these remedies take place, consumers can take some basic precautions. Know your location when you dial 911 because the technology for automatic tracking is still in the test stage. You can find the weak service areas along your normal driving routes by keeping your phone on and periodically checking the signal strength. If the FCC and the cellular industry do what they should, and soon, you won't be on your own in these matters for too long. But any delay is unacceptable for what is supposed to be an emergency service.

In Exile, Wei Remains a Force

Famed Chinese dissident can lead and inspire from the U.S.

Today China's leading political dissident, Wei Jingsheng, is a free man in the United States, far from the homeland where he championed democracy despite a long and brutal imprisonment. Wei had always said that he would not leave China, but the fact is his views on political reform can be communicated better from outside his country.

Clearly the international community's continued focus on the plight of Wei, 47, helped to create the pressure to free him. His release comes just two weeks after the summit between President Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin and is the most dramatic result of that meeting. Was it perhaps a quid pro quo for better and more commercial ties with the United States? Washington denies making any such deal, but Clinton did press the issue of human rights at a press conference with Jiang, saying

language in Chinese prisons simply because they hold views contrary to those of the Beijing regime. China's failure to abide by international covenants of human rights will continue to sully its stature.

Wei's freedom is a symbol, inside and outside China, of the power of endurance, democracy and free speech. He has never given up his ideals and struggle, despite high blood pressure and a chronic heart condition for which treatment was denied during most of his 17 years behind prison walls.

Wei considers himself first and foremost a Chinese patriot. With today's technology, geography need not limit him as an agent of political reform. His words can reach his countrymen through Radio Free Asia, much as they did through his famous mural/poster, "The Fifth Modernization: Democracy," which he put on a Beijing wall reserved for public debate 19

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