



# PUBLIC NOTICE

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Federal Communications Commission  
1919 M St., N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554

News media information 202 / 418-0500  
Fax-On-Demand 202 / 418-2830  
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>  
[ftp.fcc.gov](ftp://ftp.fcc.gov)

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## FEDERAL-STATE JOINT BOARD ON UNIVERSAL SERVICE ANNOUNCES RURAL TASK FORCE MEMBERS

CC Docket 96-45

### Background

In its Report and Order on Universal Service,<sup>1</sup> released May 8, 1997, the Commission, acting on the recommendation of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service (the Joint Board), encouraged the Joint Board to establish a Rural Task Force (RTF) to "provide valuable assistance in identifying the issues unique to rural carriers and analyzing the appropriateness of proxy cost models for rural carriers."<sup>2</sup> On September 17, 1997, the Joint Board released a Public Notice announcing the creation of a RTF and soliciting nominations for membership.<sup>3</sup>

In the September 17 Public Notice, the Joint Board established seven categories representing various segments of the telecommunications industry and requested that candidates for membership be nominated according to category.<sup>4</sup> Nominations were due on October 15, 1997.<sup>5</sup> On February 23, 1998, the Joint Board requested additional nominations, which were due on March 2, 1998.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, CC Docket No. 96-45, *Report and Order*, 12 FCC Rcd 8776 (1997) (Universal Service Order).

<sup>2</sup> Universal Service Order at 8917, para. 253.

<sup>3</sup> Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service Announces the Creation of a Rural Task Force; Solicits Nominations for Membership on Rural Task Force, *Public Notice*, FCC 97J-1 (rel. Sept. 17, 1997) (September 17 Public Notice).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service Solicits Additional Nominations for Rural Task Force, *Public Notice*, FCC 98J-1 (rel. Feb. 23, 1998).

## **RTF Members**

The Joint Board hereby names the following individuals to serve on the Rural Task Force:

Category 1: Incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) serving rural areas, their associations, or their consultants (5 positions, four of which must be ILECs with annual operating revenues of \$40 million or less).

Jack Brown, Golden West Telecommunications Cooperative, Inc.  
Evelyn Jerden, Western New Mexico Telephone Company, Inc.  
Joan Mandeville, Blackfoot Telephone Cooperative  
Robert Schoonmaker, GVNW, Inc.  
Jack H. Rhyner, TelAlaska, Inc.

Category 2: Rural competitive local exchange carriers, their associations, or their consultants (2 positions).

Thomas Beard, Arrow Communications, Inc.  
David R. Conn, McLeod USA, Inc.

Category 3: Consumer advocates, their associations, or their consultants (2 positions).

Billy Jack Gregg, Consumer Advocate of West Virginia  
Steve Ward, Public Advocate of Maine

Category 4: Interexchange carriers, their associations, or their consultants (2 positions).

Carol Ann Bischoff, Competitive Telecommunications Association  
Joel Lubin, AT&T

Category 5: Representative of insular areas and/or Alaska, its associations or its consultants (1 position).

David Sharp, Virgin Islands Telephone Corporation

Category 6: State regulator (1 position).

William Gillis, Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

Category 7: Other non-LEC participants (other appropriate representatives, including those of groups with special interest concerns, such as individuals or groups representing the concerns of Native Americans) (4 positions).

Gwen Moore, GeM Communications Group  
Christopher A. McLean, Rural Utilities Service

### **Issues to be Addressed by RTF**

The seventeen-member RTF is responsible for studying the establishment of a FLEC mechanism for rural telephone carriers. The primary purpose of the RTF is to consider whether a FLEC mechanism for rural carriers should have platform design features or input values that are different from those that are appropriate for non-rural carriers.<sup>7</sup> The RTF will also consider the appropriate timing of the transition to the FLEC mechanism for rural carriers. We also invite the RTF to offer its input on other issues relating to the implementation of high cost support mechanisms.

### **Organization of RTF**

The RTF shall meet as soon as practicable. At its first meeting, the RTF shall vote to select one of its members as chairperson. In addition, RTF members shall form three subgroups to focus on the following specific issues: platform design, input values, and the timing of the transition to the FLEC mechanism. The subgroups will report their findings to the full RTF.

### **Timing**

The RTF will present to the Joint Board a report that makes specific recommendations on the rural FLEC mechanism. The RTF must submit this report to the Joint Board nine months after the date on which the Commission implements a FLEC mechanism for non-rural carriers. The Joint Board will then file a report with the Commission evaluating the RTF's recommendations. The Joint Board's report should be filed before the Commission issues a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on a FLEC mechanism for rural carriers.

For further information, contact Pam Gallant, Accounting Policy Division, at (202) 418-7400.

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<sup>7</sup> See September 17 Public Notice; Universal Service Order at 8918, paras. 254-255.