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July 12, 2000

EX PARTE – Via Electronic Filing

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
The Portals  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Coalition for Affordable Local and Long Distance Service Proposal –  
CC Dockets 96-262, 94-1, 96-45, 99-249

Dear Ms. Salas:

On July 6, 2000, Robert Blau and Mary Henze (of BellSouth), Jay Bennett (of SBC), Pete Sywenki (of Sprint), Mike Del Casino (of AT&T) and I (on behalf of the Coalition for Affordable Local and Long Distance Service), met with Lorraine Miller, Chief, Consumer Information Bureau, Roy Kolly, Assistant Chief, Consumer Information Bureau, and Ana Janckson-Curtis and Ellen Blackler, both of the Common Carrier Bureau, to discuss consumer education efforts by the CALLS member companies. The substance of the discussion is summarized in the attached handout.

In accordance with the rules, a copy of this letter is being filed electronically in each of the above-captioned dockets.

Sincerely,



John T. Nakahata

Counsel to the Coalition for Affordable Local and  
Long Distance Service

JTN/krs  
Attachment

cc: Ms. Lorraine Miller, Chief, Consumer Information Bureau  
Mr. Roy Kolly, Assistant Chief, Consumer Information Bureau  
Ms. Ana Janckson-Curtis, Common Carrier Bureau  
Ms. Ellen Blackler, Common Carrier Bureau

## **CALLS Consumer Education Update July 6, 2000**

### **1. *Bill Messages and Customer Service***

- a) Explanatory bill messages now running in July billing cycle for all companies. Many companies provide bill messages in Spanish and Braille.
- b) Customer service representatives provided with CALLS-specific script and trained to handle CALLS-related questions. 800-numbers to reach customer service are clearly marked on bills.
- c) Many companies have special 800-numbers, some directing callers to group of customer service representatives dedicated to CALLS issues.
- d) Companies are developing methods to track calls received regarding CALLS changes.

### **2. *Outreach to Consumer Groups***

- a) CALLS members are conducting meetings with number of consumer groups to explain CALLS-related changes and to discuss how to partner to spread message as broadly as possible. Print material shared. Meetings held to-date:
  - Communications Workers of America
  - NADO
  - Alliance for Public Technology
  - United Homeowners Association
  - National Grange
  - TRAC
  - United Seniors Health Cooperative
  - National Consumers League
  - Consumer Action
  - Rainbow PUSH
  - American Association of Retired Persons
- b) CALLS member companies are mobilizing their consumer/community outreach organizations to explain CALLS at the grass-roots level, distribute consumer education material, and promote [www.phonebillcentral.org](http://www.phonebillcentral.org).
  - Over 1,500 simple-language fliers explaining changes and promoting website distributed at end of June at the Points of Light Conference in Orlando and at the Helen Keller Festival in Tuscumbia, AL (BellSouth)

- Discussion of CALLS during "Telecom Issues" panel at National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators conference, Chicago, IL, late June (Verizon).
- "Internet Cafes" at national conferences of National Association of the Deaf and A. G. Bell Association of the Deaf week of July 9 (3,000+ combined attendees). [www.phonebillcentral.org](http://www.phonebillcentral.org) will be automatic homepage for all computers. (Verizon)
- Media kit for consumer reporters highlighting Lifeline, understanding phone bill, etc., for distribution in July (Verizon)
- CALLS consumer education information to be distributed at Southeastern Legislative Conference, Biloxi, MS August 5-9. (BellSouth)

### **3. Creation of Consumer Information Websites**

- a) CALLS members have created new [www.phonebillcentral.org](http://www.phonebillcentral.org) website. Operational as of July 1; 1,300 visits as of July 6.
  - Site is designed to be fully accessible
  - Material is suitable for duplication and distribution by company representatives and consumer/community organizations
  - Visits to site will be tracked
  
- b) Current contents:
  - simple-language explanation of changes taking place
  - company-specific sections with bill message text, Q&As, links to company sites, company contact information
  - key terms in bill messages are hypertext to clear, simple-language definitions
  - information about selecting services, long distance rate shoppers
  - general telephone consumer tips
  - links to other telephone consumer websites
  
- c) Website will continue to be developed/enhanced. Potential additions:
  - FCC consumer tips
  - company-specific "How to read your phone bill"
  - notice and explanation of new bill formats
  
- d) CALLS members working with USTA to create comprehensive Lifeline website: [www.lifelinesupport.org](http://www.lifelinesupport.org); will contain state-by-state information on Lifeline and Linkup programs, qualification standards, contact information, etc.

#### **4. Promotion of Consumer Information Websites**

CALLS member companies are already promoting [www.phonebillcentral.org](http://www.phonebillcentral.org) website in variety of ways.

- a) Positioning [www.phonebillcentral.org](http://www.phonebillcentral.org) banner with direct link on appropriate websites
  - [www.phonepolicy.com](http://www.phonepolicy.com)
  - BellSouth customer information site (60,000 visits/month) and residential consumer site (200,000 visits/month)
  - BellSouth corporate information site (100,000 visits/month)
- b) Highlighting [www.phonebillcentral.org](http://www.phonebillcentral.org) in initial CALLS bill messages; (BellSouth, Sprint)
- c) Abbreviated bill message appearing on bills for additional months; i.e., “Check out [www.phonebillcentral.org](http://www.phonebillcentral.org) for telephone consumer information” (Sprint)
- d) Newspaper advertisements in major and secondary markets explaining CALLS changes and listing [www.phonebillcentral.org](http://www.phonebillcentral.org) as source for additional information (SBC)
- e) Phrase “Need help understanding your phone bill? Visit [www.phonebillcentral.org](http://www.phonebillcentral.org) for telephone consumer information.” to be printed on 11 million bill envelopes in month of September in BellSouth region (another 5.5 million to be distributed in October and November in KY and FL)
- f) Statement “Or visit [www.phonebillcentral.org](http://www.phonebillcentral.org) for additional information” included in press releases regarding billing and rate changes. (BellSouth)