

Qwest

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Steven R. Beck
Senior Attorney

July 31, 2000

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Room TW-A325
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

RE: In the Matter of Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service,
CC Docket No. 96-45, Ninth Report and Order and
Eighteenth Order on Reconsideration, released November 2, 1999

Dear Ms. Roman Salas:

Pursuant to 47 C.F.R. Section 36.612(a)(2), Qwest Corporation¹ ("Qwest") is required to file certain documents to be used by the National Exchange Carrier Association ("NECA") in determining universal service fund support amounts for non-rural carriers. Specifically, pursuant to rules revised in the above-cited orders, each non-rural local exchange company is to provide to NECA information reflecting the number of loops the carrier maintains in each study area, by wire center (see, 47 C.F.R. Rule 36.611(h)). Qwest maintains that this information is commercial information that is confidential and not customarily disclosed to the public. Consequently, Qwest herein formally requests that these documents filed July 31, 2000 be withheld from public disclosure pursuant to 5 U.S.C. Section 552(b)(4) and 47 C.F.R. Section 0.457 and 47 C.F.R. Section 0.459 of the Commission's rules.

Qwest believes this information is correctly categorized as indicated, pursuant to Section 0.457(d), as "Trade secrets and commercial or financial information." This information should not routinely be made available for public inspection. Should the Commission not deem Section 0.457(d) specifically applicable to the above-referenced information, then Qwest requests that this information be withheld from public inspection pursuant to Section 0.459. Disclosure of this highly-competitive information could result in substantial competitive harm to Qwest.

¹ On June 30, 2000, U S WEST, Inc., the parent and sole shareholder of U S WEST Communications, Inc., merged with and into Qwest Communications International Inc. Further, on July 6, 2000, U S WEST Communications, Inc. was renamed Qwest Corporation.

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Public disclosure of the detailed line count information, especially when provided on a wire center basis, would likely result in substantial competitive harm to Qwest. Qwest is facing competition in its service territories and thus access to this type of detailed information by its competitors would expose Qwest to targeted, "cream-skimming" competitive activities. In particular, competitors may use this information to target their services and markets, knowing in advance both the services and prices offered by Qwest in those same markets. In addition, the recurring nature of the request (quarterly submissions) provides time-series data that is not available anywhere and is especially competitively sensitive. Finally, the data has commercial value to third party data vendors. It would allow data vendors free use of Qwest's data for creating commercial marketing tools without proper compensation to Qwest. For these reasons, this is not the type of information that Qwest, as a competitor, would routinely share with the public in general, or its competitors in particular. It is Qwest's practice to withhold this information from public inspection as proprietary in all circumstances.

All information related to this request that is subsequently submitted will include the following legend: "Qwest Proprietary Information." At no time has the information described herein been shared with persons outside of Qwest, unless done so subject to a non-disclosure arrangement. It is for these reasons that Qwest requests continuing proprietary treatment of these documents.

Sincerely,

/s/

Steven R. Beck

cc: Larry Strickling, CCB Chief