



**Organizations Concerned
about Rural Education**
1201 16th Street NW, #510
Washington, D.C. 20036
202-822-7638

Member Organizations

- American Association of School Administrators
- American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- American Library Association
- Bell Atlantic
- Bell South
- Communicating for Agriculture
- Consortium for School Networking
- Credit Union National Association
- Forest Counties School Coalition
- National Association of Counties
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Education Association
- National Education Knowledge Industry Association
- National Farmers Union
- National Grange
- National Indian School Boards Association
- National Rural Education Association
- National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
- National School Boards Association
- National Vocational Agricultural Teachers Association
- North Country Education Foundation of New Hampshire
- Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools
- Rebuild America's Schools
- SBC Telecommunications, Inc.
- U S West Communications

October 16, 2000

Magalie Roman Salas
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington, DC 20554

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

RE: CC Docket No: CC-00-176
Application by Verizon New England for Authorization Under
Section 271 to Provide Long Distance Service In Massachusetts

Dear Ms. Salas:

Organizations Concerned about Rural Education (OCRE) submits the following comments on the above referenced matter in response to the Public Notice issued by the Federal Communications Commission on September 22, 2000. As an advocate for rural schools, libraries, teachers and students, I urge you to support the application in order to bring competition into the state as quickly as possible.

OCRE is committed to ensuring that the best rates possible for telecommunications services are available for rural schools and libraries. Affordable access to the Internet, homework hotlines and distance learning from home is also important. This is especially significant for rural education where distance can often act as an obstacle and deny students access to the wealth of resources available across this nation and throughout the world. Learning does not end when the bell rings at the end of the school day.

I am particularly pleased with Verizon's dedication to address the needs of rural education and applaud their efforts to promote the E-rate program, distance learning applications, broadband deployment, teacher training and educational organizations throughout their footprint. As the first regional telephone company to secure approval from the FCC to enter the long distance market, Verizon has also demonstrated a continued commitment to their customers, including rural customers.

There is evidence that Verizon's entry into the long distance market has been an unqualified success, enhancing both local and long distance competition. By allowing Verizon into the long distance market in Massachusetts, the FCC will help to create the same level of competition for consumers in that state. This expanded competition will also drive down the cost of these services to schools and libraries and make a wider array of services more affordable to rural communities.

On behalf of the students, teachers and parents who live in rural America, OCRE urges the FCC to act quickly and approve the application.

Sincerely,

Dale Lestina
President

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