

AARP

RECEIVED

FEB 22 2001

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

February 22, 2001

EX PARTE OR LATE FILED

The Honorable Michael Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

Re: WT Docket No. 99-121

99-217

ORIGINAL

AARP appreciates having the opportunity to comment on the Commission's October 12, 2000 Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPR) dealing with promoting competition in local communications markets. The ability of competitive telecommunications service providers to offer service to consumers residing in Multiple Tenant Environments (MTEs) is an issue that directly impacts an important segment of our membership. A significant percentage of America's estimated 40 million MTE households are headed by seniors.

AARP is concerned that these consumers will increasingly find that their landlord or building owner has foreclosed their right to choose among telecommunications service providers. In a September 20, 2000 letter to former Chairman Kennard, AARP asked the FCC to act swiftly and decisively to eliminate this barrier to competition, asserting that all consumers, regardless of where they live, should have the choice of providers for their telecommunications services. One way in which to achieve this goal would be the elimination of exclusive contracts between a telecommunications service provider and the building owner.

In its FNPRM, the Commission took a welcome first step by prohibiting exclusive contracts between commercial MTEs and telecommunication service providers, while requesting comments on whether to extend the prohibition to residential MTEs. AARP believes that the FCC should extend the prohibition on exclusive contracts to residential MTEs so that residential tenants have the same ability to choose providers that the commercial tenants will have.

The Telecommunications Act of 1996 has worked to eliminate barriers to competition, and has provided more choices for many consumers of telecommunications services.

This has not been the case, however, for MTE residents. Many single-family

No. of Copies rec'd 0156
List A B C D E

601 E Street, NW Washington, DC 20049
Esther "Tess" Canja, President

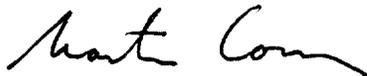
(202) 434-2277 www.aarp.org
Horace B. Deets, Executive Director

homeowners have the ability to choose whether to have cable or satellite television transmissions, and a growing number have choices among high-speed internet service providers. These options are currently not available to the vast majority of tenants in residential MTEs.

The FCC must act to ensure that competitive carriers are able to offer their services to residential consumers in multi-dwellings units by extending the ban on exclusive contracts to include residential MTEs. Tenants, not landlords and building owners, should have the opportunity to choose among carriers for their telecommunications services.

AARP looks forward to working with the Commission, building owners and carriers to ensure that meaningful telecommunications service competition can be provided for all segments of the population.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin Corry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Martin" and last name "Corry" clearly distinguishable.

Martin A. Corry
Director
Federal Affairs