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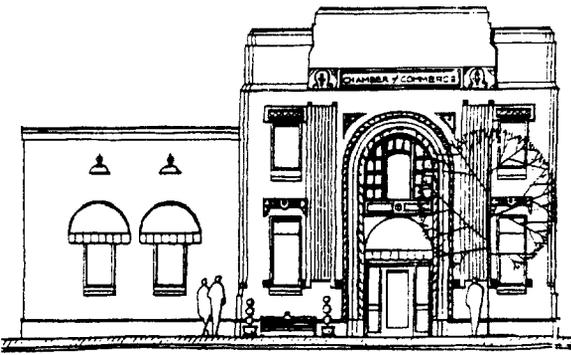
CHAMBER of COMMERCE

FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS

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August 27, 2001

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445-12th St. SW
Room TW-B204
Washington D.C. 20554

RE: CC Docket 01-194 ✓

Dear Secretary Salas:

On behalf of the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce, please allow me encourage the Federal Communications Commission to permit Southwestern Bell to offer long distance service in Arkansas. Southwestern Bell has been an active corporate partner in Fort Smith for many years. The company has provided excellent telecommunications service and has also supported our community in many ways.

The Arkansas Public Service Commission, upon review of Southwestern Bell's long distance application, said that the company met the requirements of the 14-point checklist. The company has also met all other requirements of the 1996 Federal Telecommunications Act, opening the market to local telecommunications competitors.

We believe that open competition is a good thing for local businesses and consumers. Open competition usually lowers prices and raises the level of service offered. We know that in other states where Southwestern Bell has been allowed to sell long distance service, the competing carriers have responded by offering more discounts and better packages. In addition, it has stimulated competitive activity in the local market.

We hope your Commission will approve Southwestern Bell's long distance application for Arkansas. It will be good for our economy, good for our citizens and good for business!

Sincerely,

Jerry R. Stewart, M.D.
Chairman of the Board

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