



January 31, 2002

William F. Caton  
Office of the Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Room TW-B204  
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: Application by Verizon for Authorization under Section 271 to Provide Long Distance Service in New Jersey**

Dear Mr. Caton:

The National Hispanic Council on Aging (NHCoA) is pleased to submit these comments in support of Verizon's filing requesting FCC authorization to provide in-region, long-distance services in New Jersey. The NHCoA represents the interest of the Hispanic Elderly and operates chapters in the state of New Jersey. The NHCoA believes that Verizon's entry into New Jersey's long distance market will benefit the elderly, especially those in low-income, minority and urban markets.

The NHCoA has previously supported Verizon's filing to offer service in New York, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. New York, the first state to approve a long-distance application, is an excellent example of where that vision is working. According to two surveys released in May 2001 by the Telecommunications Research & Action Center (TRAC) New Yorkers will save up to \$700 million on long distance *and* local telephone service. The TRAC study confirms the benefits of competition.

We believe the elderly can expect many benefits to follow in New Jersey if Verizon's long-distance application is approved. We found in New York that other competitors accelerated their efforts to compete in the local market and to meet the challenges presented by a new major competitor for other telecommunications services. We expect the same to happen in New Jersey if Verizon's application is approved.

We have also found that another benefit of increased competition is lower basic rates. The elderly often depend on long distance telephone service to maintain contact with family members and friends who live in distant locations. Unfortunately, elderly consumers typically rely on basic rates for their phone service rather than taking advantage of calling plans. Despite massive advertising and aggressive marketing by long distance companies, most minorities still pay basic rates, the highest rates available,

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and have not seen significant savings in their long distance bills as the cost of providing service has gone down.

In fact, AT&T recently INCREASED their basic rates for long-distance service nationwide. Verizon's basic rate plan brings the urban market – and all consumers – significant savings.

We support Verizon's long-distance application in New Jersey, and hope the Commission will approve the application without delay.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Marta Sotomayor, Ph.D.  
President and CEO  
National Hispanic Council on Aging

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