



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF

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February 1, 2002

Magalie Roman Salas
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW, Room TW-B-204
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: CC Docket No. 01-347 Reply Comments
Application by Verizon for Authorization
Under Section 271 to Provide In-Region,
InterLATA Service in the State of New Jersey**

Dear Ms. Salas:

The National Association of the Deaf (NAD), together with TDI and American Council of the Blind (ACB) join in representing the common interests of the disability community. We welcome the opportunity to submit these reply comments in support of Verizon Communications' application to provide long-distance service in the State of New Jersey. It is our shared belief that additional competition in the long-distance market can benefit consumers by lowering costs and by increasing investments in new telecommunication technologies that are invaluable to the disability community.

The NAD is the nation's oldest and largest consumer organization safeguarding the civil and accessibility rights of deaf and hard of hearing Americans. Founded in 1880, NAD advocacy areas of focus include telecommunications, education, rehabilitation, and many other areas. TDI is a national organization focusing upon technological solutions benefiting people who are deaf or hard of hearing. TDI is best known for its International Directory of TTY Numbers, e-mail addresses, and other information facilitating contact between consumers and businesses. ACB is a national consumer organization of and for Americans who are blind or have low vision. ACB has long advocated for technological solutions to the barriers faced by these Americans.

Consumers in nearby States including New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania are already benefiting from Verizon's entry into the long-distance market. Basic long-distance rates have fallen. Local competition has increased. These cost savings, which have been documented by TRAC, the Telecommunications Research and Action Center, are particularly important for citizens with disabilities, who tend to live on fixed incomes.

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If Verizon has met the 14-item checklist in section 271, *and we believe it has*, the company should be allowed to compete in the long-distance market.

Without long-distance telephone service restrictions, Verizon has an incentive to accelerate the deployment of advanced telecommunications services that can provide significant benefits to people with disabilities. These services can bring closer distance learning, telecommuting, video conferencing, and other services that particularly hold promise for Americans with disabilities. In addition, high-speed broadband would facilitate improvements in medical care.

Verizon has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to delivering enhanced services to people with disabilities. For example, even before section 255 of the Communications Act, as created in the 1996 Telecommunications Act, Verizon originated and adopted a Universal Design policy. This commitment will only grow, we believe, given the opportunity to provide long-distance service in New Jersey.

Accordingly, we urge the Commission to act without delay and approve Verizon's 271 application for the State of New Jersey. I sign on behalf of my colleagues, TDI Executive Director Claude Stout and ACB Executive Director Charles Crawford, as well as for the NAD.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy J. Bloch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Nancy J. Bloch
Executive Director