

Dear FCC Commissioners & Staff:

My name is Richard Scott and I am the General Manager of The Net Advantage, an ISP located in Joplin, Missouri. We started in late 1996 and service approximately 2,500 dial-up customers in Joplin, Carthage and Neosho, Missouri and Southeast Kansas.

Our focus has been on excellent local customer support, something they cannot get from the large national ISPs, telephone companies or smaller local ISPs. When a customer calls our offices, they get a real person who will even suggest to them that they bring their computer in for a free diagnostic check if their problem cannot be resolved over the phone. To further differentiate ourselves from others in our industry, we offer Internet content filtering, e-mail virus scanning, spam filtering, Internet training classes and in home set up for customers 50 or older as a part of our standard Internet service without additional charges.

Some of our customers want faster Internet connection speeds but until recently, we have not found a satisfactory way to deliver that service. With the demise of most of the CLEC alternative vendors, our only choice was the Southwestern Bell ISP Partner program. Initially, it took about three months to find anyone in SBC who knew what their program was and then the economics of their arrangement were not worthwhile for us. Poor economics combined with their dismal track record for service and delivery and the fact that they are both our major supplier and major competitor for DSL customers, we decided not to do business with them. We were also very aware that their ADSL service will not reach many potential customers in our market and the product is not a suitable business grade DSL service. Despite the representations of the Bells, we believe there is a very serious DSL supply deficiency in our markets.

Recently, we entered into a contract with New Edge Networks whereby we can offer their SDSL, IDSL and frame relay products to our customers and prospective customers. New Edge has been co-located in SBC's Joplin and Carthage central offices for about a year and we were given excellent references by other New Edge ISP customers who operate in markets similar to ours. Their array of products, we believe, are superior to SBC's ADSL product. We are confident that we can market those products to many small and medium sized businesses and residences that will not otherwise have access to broadband in the foreseeable future.

We are excited about our opportunities to offer these services but your approval of the the NPRM under consideration is a major threat and, ultimately, a real barrier to growth of broadband access in our markets. Why should the Bells be favored with further deregulation in light of their track record and the numerous fines that the FCC and state regulators have imposed on them for their failure to timely and fairly comply with the Communication Deregulation Act of 1996?

I was recently at an ISP meeting in Dallas and Mr. Robert Pepper told us that the FCC really needs to hear from small and regional ISPs. I hope that my input will provide you with additional information about the actual availability of broadband in non metropolitan markets such as Joplin. A copy of this letter has been sent to my Congressman, Mr. Roy Blunt. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Richard Scott

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