

Dear FCC Commissioners & Staff:

My name is Rod Lashley. I am a Vice President for STATKING Consulting, Inc., a small CRO located in Cincinnati, Ohio. I am writing to you regarding your reconsideration of the rules that require telephone companies to provide ISPs access to the public switched phone network. Removal of these requirements would be a grave mistake.

In order for our company to compete with the big contract research organizations in our field, we must be able to provide our clients with superior service. We are currently able to do that by leveraging the power of the internet, and our current DSL connection from an independent ISP.

We received quotes from three different companies when we were initiating our DSL service. The quotes were from the local telephone company, a national network service provider, and a local independent ISP. The best choice for our small company was clearly the independent ISP. The larger companies were going to charge us for services and options that we did not need. And the national provider's fees were twice what we are paying for our current connection with an independent provider.

I and millions others like me depend on my local Internet Service Provider to give me access to Internet services and options not available from the large telephone carriers. If you choose to remove my ISP's access to the public phone network, it will no longer be able to provide me and others the level of service we have come to enjoy and expect for Internet access. Such action will simply force independent ISPs out of business and will do nothing but LIMIT consumer choice not expand it.

Furthermore, by removing fair interconnection requirements and reducing our choice, you will likely also allow consumer rates to rise. By having a current choice among several providers, I am not only allowed to find the best services to suit my needs, but also for best price. Reducing the number of ISPs in the marketplace will certainly have the obvious result of reduced competition and increased prices for consumers in the long run.

This is currently the case with our local phone bill. Most of the business calls that we make are of the long distance variety. With the competition that we have in our long distance service, it is much cheaper than our local phone service. We have no choice in our local telephone service, and we are forced to pay a premium for the product.

I sincerely hope that you think very carefully what you are considering. Consumers all across America are depending on you to make the right decision. The right decision is to maintain and grow the level of competition in the Internet marketplace. That goal is best met by protecting and nurturing competitive market conditions for the thousands of independent ISPs - not by handing even more market power to the monopolies who control our phone network.

Commissioners, I implore you to continue to protect the ISPs' access to the public telephone networks, thereby protecting the rights of millions of consumers like me and my company.

Sincerely,

Rod Lashley  
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