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**EX PARTE**

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch  
Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
The Portals  
445 12<sup>th</sup> St. SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

**Re: CC Docket 02-361**

Dear Ms. Dortch:

This is to inform you that on December 9, 2003, BellSouth met with Michelle Carey, Tamara Preiss, Tom Navin, Julie Veach, Jeremy Miller, Teri Natoli, Cathy Carpino, Brent Olson, Russ Hanser, Jennifer McKee, and Darryl Cooper of the Wireline Competition Bureau to discuss issues relation got the dockets identified above. Representing BellSouth at this meeting were Fred McCallum, Mike Harper and the undersigned.

During these meetings, BellSouth described its efforts to deploy Voices over Internet Protocol services and the regulatory hurdles it faces in doing so. Among the issues raised, was the impact of the Commission's Computer Inquiry rules on the deployment of the basis for this discussion. Also mentioned during these meetings was AT&T's Petition for Declaratory Ruling (Docket 02-361). BellSouth urged that the Commission should expeditiously resolve that proceeding by concluding AT&T's service to be a telecommunications service to access charges.

Pursuant to Commission rules, please include this notice and attachment in the docket of the proceedings referenced above.

Sincerely,



Glenn Reynolds

cc: Michelle Carey  
Tamara Preiss  
Tom Navin  
Julie Veach  
Jeremy Miller  
Teri Natoli  
Cathy Carpino  
Brent Olson  
Russ Hanser  
Jennifer McKee  
Darryl Cooper

**VoIP**

**BellSouth**

**December 9, 2003**

# Major Questions Around VoIP

- What is the right regulatory regime for VoIP services and how can policy makers ensure that all providers are regulated in the same manner to achieve the FCC's goals?
- How should regulators ensure that all competitors are subject to similar public interest obligations?

# VoIP – General Consensus

- There appears to be a general consensus around the following:
  - VoIP applications should evolve in an economic regulation free zone – absent a compelling justification
  - Policies need to facilitate and encourage investment in and convergence of voice, data and video onto Internet based networks
  - VoIP investment and jobs need to remain in the U. S.
  - Public interest (CALEA, 911, USF) must be addressed

# Key Goals Regarding VoIP

- Ensure that there is parity among all providers (cable, ILECs, CLECs, IXCs, ISPs, ASPs) in the regulation of VoIP services
  - VoIP industry is nascent and no company or industry segment dominates this market, especially not the ILECs/BOCs
  - As VoIP is a new broadband technology requiring new investment, it is critical that no competitor class be saddled with asymmetrical and unfair regulation
- Minimize economic regulation around VoIP services sold to end-users
- Protect Universal Service

# There are Two Paths to the Right Outcome

- VoIP as an information service
- VoIP as a telecommunications service

# VoIP As An Information Service

- There should be no economic regulation (i.e., regulation of prices, service quality, etc.) for any provider of VoIP services
- Public safety regulation (i.e., E911, CALEA, etc.) should apply to VoIP services after giving industry reasonable opportunity to develop and implement cost effective technical solutions.
- VoIP providers should contribute to USF
- Access charges should apply wherever the PSTN is used

# VoIP As An Information Service

- The service is interstate due to the jurisdictionally inseverable nature of data packets – calling capabilities are an integral part of a constant flow of data packets
- The FCC has primary jurisdiction over NANP numbering resources used to provide VoIP information service applications
- The FCC should establish the regulatory paradigm that applies to these services.

# VoIP As An Information Service

- There is no compelling justification to apply FCC's Computer Inquiry (CI) rules, adopted in the 1980's to address narrowband telecommunications competitive concerns, to the BOC provision of VoIP broadband communications services
- CI rules impose unnecessarily costly and duplicative regulations on BOC provision of these services
- Competitive discrimination concerns are fully addressed by the local competition statutes in 1996 Act and FCC's corresponding implementation rules
- VoIP providers are freely operating as or forming business alliances with CLECs and there has been no demonstrated need for an additional layer of CI regulation with regard to these services.
- There is no compelling reason to apply CI rules to any provider of broadband communications services absent the existence of a dominant provider of such services.

# VoIP As An Information Service

- CI rules impose unnecessarily costly and duplicative regulations on BOC provision of VoIP broadband communications services:
  - Requires tariffing of the telecom component(s) underlying the information service to ensure third-party access to network capabilities equivalent to those used by BOC's ISP. Local competition rules ensure same equivalent access for VoIP services
  - Requires that non-affiliated ISPs be given the same access to OSSs for telecom services. Local competition rules (e.g. OSS parity rules) ensure equivalent access for VoIP providers
  - Requires BOC to impute a "fictitious" two-mile transport cost to its information service when collocating VoIP equipment in a central office. CLECs can collocate equipment in same CO rendering this rule superfluous in a packet transmission environment

# VoIP As An Telecommunications Service

- Wherever VoIP technology is used in a transparent manner to the originating end-user customer to transport some part of the call:
  - It is telecommunications service
  - Access charges apply as with any other telecommunications service

# Switched Access Charges and VoIP

- Wherever a VoIP call accesses the PSTN, switched access charges should apply.
- The ESP access exemption does not apply to such traffic
  - The FCC should clarify that the ESP access charge exemption does not apply regardless of how the VoIP service is classified.

# VoIP and Access Charges

- While BellSouth's access charge argument makes good policy sense, a transition to Bill and Keep for all intercarrier compensation is needed to provide clear and certain incentives for network investment

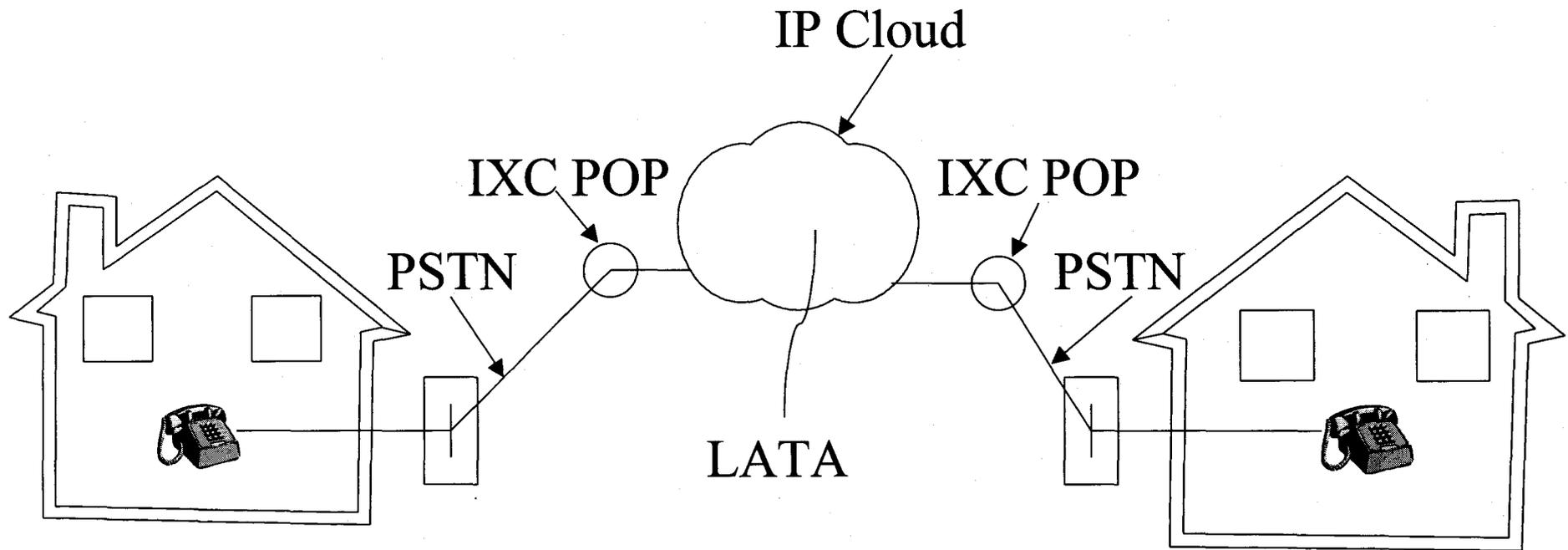
## Convening of a Federal – State Joint Board

- FCC should convene a Joint Board to develop, within 9 months, rules for the public interest and public safety obligations of all VoIP providers
- The issues to be addressed should include provision of E911, capability for surveillance by law enforcement, access for disabled, and support for universal service
- The Joint Board would also make recommendations on ISP direct access to NANP numbers

# Conclusions

- Given no dominant provider of VoIP services, all providers, including BOCs, should be free of economic regulation
- If VoIP is classified as an information service, there is no compelling justification to apply Computer Inquiry rules
- The ESP access charge exemption does not apply to VoIP regardless of how it is classified
- Access charges should apply anytime PSTN is used to originate or terminate VoIP calls

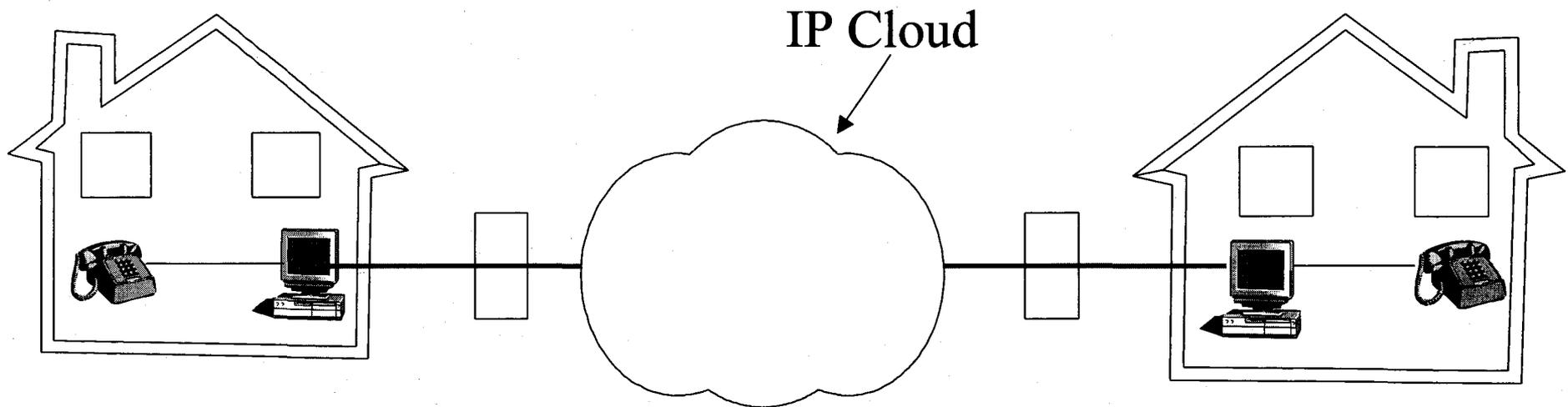
# Traditional Phone to Phone



Call Direction →

*Conclusion: This service is a telecommunications service, and access charges apply at both ends.*

# Computer (or VoIP Phone) to Computer (or VoIP Phone)

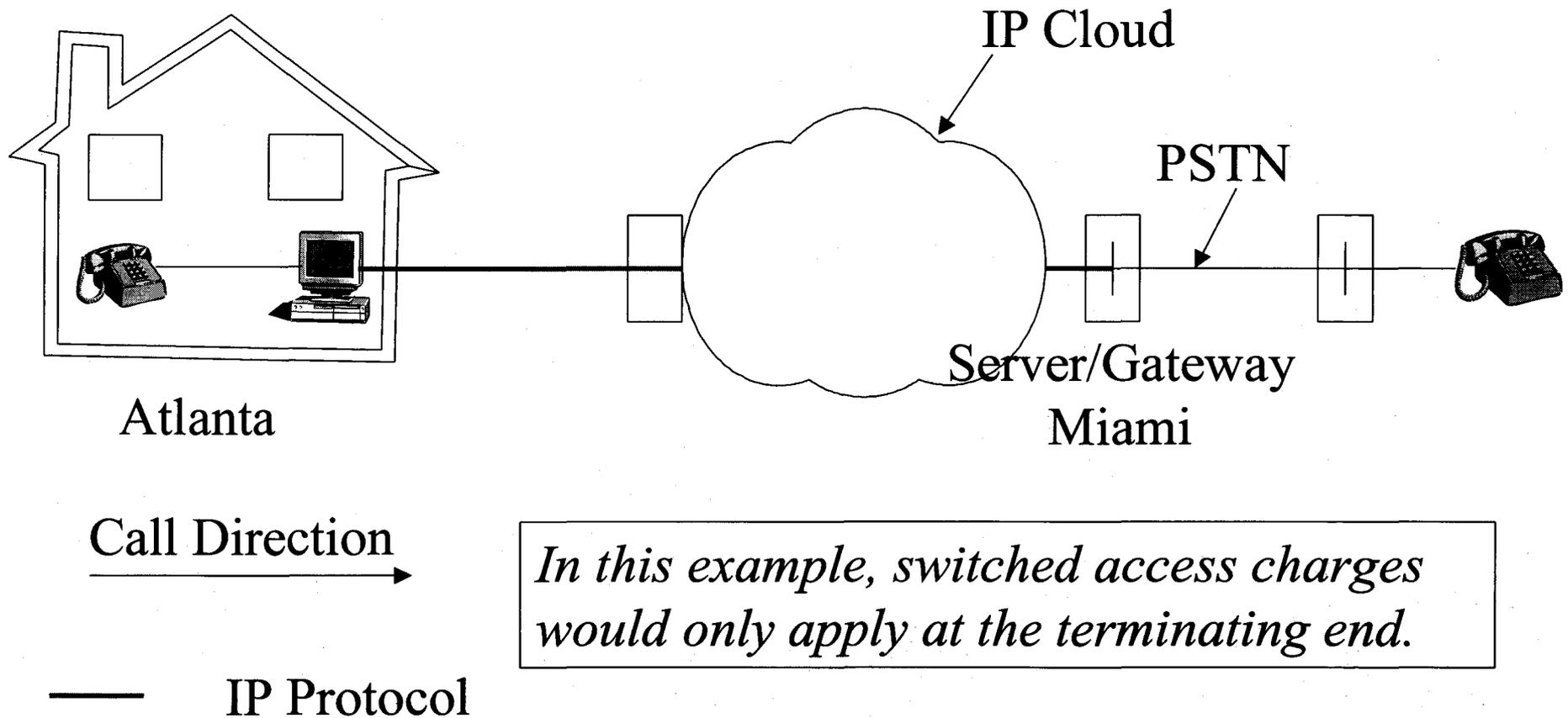


Call Direction  
→

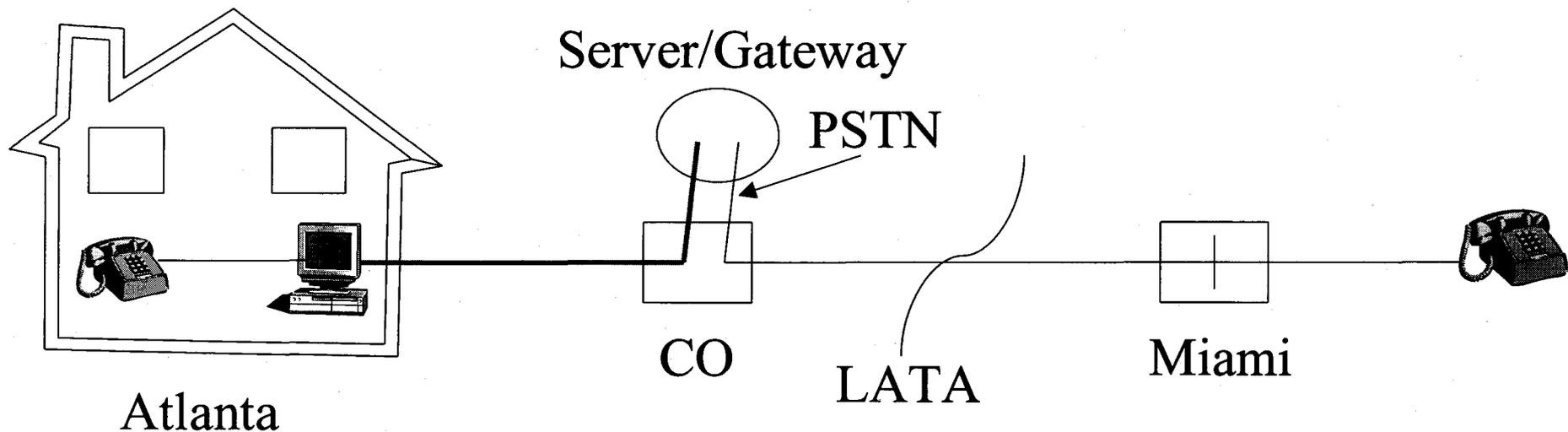
— IP Protocol

*Conclusion: This service is an information service. Since any “voice” call never hits the PSTN, switched access charges do not apply.*

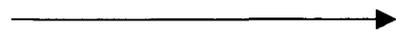
# Computer (or VoIP Phone) to Phone - #1



# Computer (or VoIP Phone) to Phone - #2



Call Direction



— IP  
Protocol

*In this example, switched access charges would apply at both the originating end and the terminating end since the PSTN is accessed and used on both ends.*

# Backup

## VoIP Regulatory Treatment is Cloudy

- Minnesota – Vonage VoIP service is a telecom service; California and Wisconsin have made similar decisions regarding VoIP; federal court blocked Minn. PUC ruling; PUC is appealing
- North Carolina – No definitive ruling though public staff leans toward telecom service outcome
- Florida – VoIP is free from regulation, per legislation
- FCC – Has leaned toward information service classification (except for “phone-to-phone”), but has not made definitive findings; Vonage has asked for a declaratory ruling – comments filed 10/27/03; replies 11/24/03
- Alabama – Comments submitted 10/31/03 and replies 12/2/03 on petition filed by 31 ICOs asking that VoIP be a telecom service
- FCC conducted a VoIP forum on 12/1 and has announced it will issue an NPRM shortly

## Vonage Petition re. VoIP

- Filed a petition with the FCC in response to a Minnesota PUC decision to regulate Vonage's VoIP service as a "telephone service"
- Argues that it is an ISP and the FCC should declare that the PUC is preempted from imposing common carrier regulation, including regulation of entry and rates, on the information service ("Internet communications application") it offers; also asks the FCC to find that certain specific E911 requirements imposed by the PUC are in conflict with federal policies
- States that preemption is necessary because of the impossibility of separating the Internet, or any service offered over it, into intrastate and interstate components
- U.S. District Court issued a permanent injunction forbidding the PUC from enforcing its order, agreeing that Vonage's service was an information service; PUC has appealed
- *BellSouth comments on the Vonage Petition:* FCC should make decisions around VoIP and how public interest regulatory obligations should apply. FCC should rule that phone-to-phone IP is basic telecom service.

# Florida Legislation on VoIP

- With SB 0654, the legislature found that VoIP should be “free from unnecessary regulation, regardless of the provider” (enacted 5/23/03)
- VoIP was excluded from the definition of the term “service”, but nothing in this law “shall affect the rights and obligations of any entity related to the payment of switched access rates or other intercarrier compensation, if any, related to [VoIP] service.”
- Should the FCC or FPSC issue a final order determining that access charges do not apply to VoIP service or a functionally equivalent service, a LEC can reduce its switched access rates to its authorized local reciprocal compensation rates in a revenue-neutral manner

# Alabama Proceeding re. VoIP

- 31 ICOs petition for a declaratory ruling that providers of intrastate “phone-to-phone” IP telephony service or other VoIP services are:
  - “Transportation companies” as defined by Alabama Code;
  - Subject to APSC rules applicable to provision of telephone service, including filing of tariffs; and
  - Responsible for payment of intrastate access charges for orig. or term. of non-local traffic from, or to, the ILEC’s PSTN
- They believe a declaratory order is needed now to ensure a level playing field for all providers of “voice telephone service”
- *BellSouth comments on the ICOs’ Petition:* PSC should voluntarily abstain from devoting its resources to an exhaustive fact-finding inquiry and allow the FCC to complete its rulemaking