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Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

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In the Matter of)	
)	
Elimination of Rate-of-Return Regulation of Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers)	RM No. 10822
)	
Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service)	CC Docket No. 96-45
)	

ORDER

Adopted: December 17, 2003

Released: December 18, 2003

By the Chief, Telecommunications Access Policy Division:

1. On November 19, 2003, the Commission released a *Public Notice* in the above-captioned proceeding regarding Western Wireless Corporation's ("Western Wireless") Petition for Rulemaking to Eliminate Rate-of-Return Regulation of Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers ("Petition"), Report No. 2638 (November 19, 2003). On December 12, 2002, CenturyTel, Inc. (CenturyTel) filed a motion to extend the comment and reply comment deadlines to January 16, 2003 and February 13, 2003, respectively.¹

2. We hereby grant CenturyTel's motion for extension of time. It is the policy of the Commission that extensions of time are not routinely granted.² We find, however, that CenturyTel has shown good cause for an extension of the deadlines for filing comments and reply comments in this proceeding. CenturyTel maintains that the Petition raises issues with broad regulatory implications that are likely to generate a substantial number of comments from interested parties, and that an extension of time for the filing of comments and reply comments would permit more full and informed responses to these issues and help the parties to develop a better record for the Commission's decision, without prejudicing the interests of any parties.³ CenturyTel also notes that the filing period during which comments and reply comments are due includes the Christmas and New Year's holidays and that numerous other pleadings are due before the Christmas holiday. Accordingly, we find that CenturyTel has shown good cause for an extension.

¹ *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, CC Docket No. 96-45, Motion for Extension of Time (December 12, 2003) ("Motion"). The current comment and reply comment deadlines are December 19, 2003 and January 5, 2004, respectively.

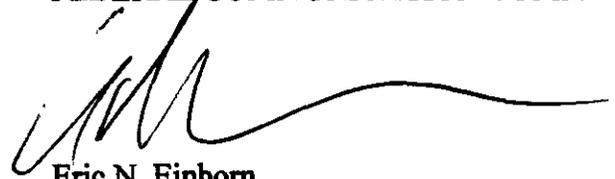
² 47 C.F.R. § 1.46(a).

³ Motion at 1-2. CenturyTel states that counsel for Western Wireless fully supports the extension.

3. This matter shall continue to be conducted as a permit-but-disclose proceeding in accordance with the Commission's *ex parte* rules.⁴ All other requirements discussed in the *Public Notice* remain in effect. For further information please contact Theodore Burmeister, Attorney, Telecommunications Access Policy Division, Wireline Competition Bureau at (202) 418-7400, TTY (202) 418-0484.

4. ACCORDINGLY, IT IS ORDERED that, pursuant to sections 4(i), 4(j), and 5(c) of the Communications Act, 47 U.S.C. §§ 154(i), 154(j), 155(c), and sections 0.91, 0.291, 1.46 of the Commission's rules, 47 C.F.R. §§ 0.91, 0.291, 1.46, the motion for extension of time filed by CenturyTel, IS GRANTED.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATION COMMISSION



Eric N. Einhorn
Chief,
Telecommunications Access Policy Division
Wireline Competition Bureau

⁴ 47 C.F.R. § 1.1206.