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Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

Carl Kiefer [ckza@sbcglobal.net]
Docket 03-266

Dear Suzanne,

Thank you for getting back to me.

Indeed, I would like to voice my comments electronically, and for the public record, as respects the Level 3 forbearance petition. Some of it will mirror what I discussed with you on the telephone. I welcome you to share that with your superiors at the commission too.

As a consumer, I can't express enough how important it will be for the FCC to empower the American citizen to be able to communicate ubiquitously, but as importantly, cost effectively, as we continue to fast forward as an information society from one with industrial roots subsequent to one with agrarian tentacles, all of which are slowly migrating away from us.

If our political authorities haven't caught onto this changing landscape by now, then as a society we may be doomed and ill equipped to compete in the new world. If there was one thing that I admired about former Chairman Powell, it was that he seemed to understand intimately what was in jeopardy.

As my grandfather, through my father's advice taught me, knowledge is power, and never before in human history has so much been at stake for my children and grandchildren with respect to ACCESSING knowledge via "fast speed" broadband internet connections.

One only has to look to Asia, as an example, for a region of the world where unencumbered, unfettered access continues to place them at the forefront of technological advancements. As importantly, one just has to look at innovative, possibly more affluent American families today, for clues to how important coordinating technology, and software applications have empowered them to work or educate themselves in the comfort of their own homes. Ultimately, one might conclude that this will enhance quality of lives, and living standards too.

Those connections to the world's knowledge base will be diminished if the FCC continues to enable legacy carriers to extend their 125 years of monopoly reign to the "communications" portion of this changing paradigm; voice, video and data converged networks.

At the crux of this matter, is Level 3's forbearance petition, which asks the FCC to acknowledge, as they have in the past, that voice over internet protocol, is an "information" service, versus a "telecom" service, while allowing it to incorporate a

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"reciprocal" compensation regime(cost justified), instead of the legacy "access charge" regime(profits beyond cost) which the current Baby Bells seem so desperate to preserve.

Moreover, as I understand it, the access charge regime is based upon "per minute" useage, thereby, discouraging the potential adoption of "fast speed" connections which will ultimately free American citizens from their last mile bondage.

For example, if I am continued to be forced to overpay for my "communications costs," under an access fee regime on my internet originated or terminated calls, over or on top of a fast speed connection, then I am likely to avoid purchasing a fast speed connection to begin with.

To expand further, the functions and features of various voice applications over "fast speed" internet connections are not only included on a flat rate basis, like call waiting, caller I.D., anonymous call rejection, but empower me from my desktop to view my calling functions, services and costs real time, as opposed to calling a Baby Bell who doesn't know what my bill looks like until after it is PRINTED, and in my hands. How long has it taken them to establish this billing system?

These monopolies have prevented American progress during the past decade, almost(1996 Telecom Reform Act), all in the name of protecting their legacy investments for which they have done little to innovate and bring cutting edge technologies or solutions to the important end users who are their captured market because of their monopoly powers only.

As a baby bell customer today, for example, I have been held hostage with DSL service, the bells' fast speed version, only if I stay tied to their local land lines, and all their associated fees, taxes, and charges, some of which are leftover remnants of the Spanish American War. These are encumbrances to my personal liberties, and my children and grandchildren's futures too. As an economic solution, I've had to forgo their expensive features just to keep my "fast speed" connection in conjunction with their bare bones base services.

In summary, I say to you, although these are hard choices to be made which may bring pressures onto established industries, never before have the stakes been so high, for the whole nation's people, as they are today, if we continue to protect legacy investments by legacy companies whose systems no longer serve the people wisely.

Please support my plea to empower innovation and technological advancements rather than the status quo which is only beneficial to a select few.

Send a resounding message to the BELLS that the people are mad as hell, and they aren't willing to accept the "status quo" any longer. Validating Level 3's forbearance petition is the right thing to do for America as a whole.

Sincerely,

Carl Kiefer

An American Consumer