



BLACK LEADERSHIP FORUM, INC.

May 23, 2005

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Verizon Communications, Inc. and MCI, Inc. Applications for Consent to Transfer Control, WC Docket No. 05-75

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The Black Leadership Forum, Inc., (BLF) would like to share its perspective and general support for the proposed merger of Verizon Communications, Inc. with MCI, Inc. The BLF believes that it is in the public interest for the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) to grant the applications for consent to transfer control in the above-captioned docket for the reasons detailed below. The BLF is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to promote creative and coordinated Black Leadership, to empower African Americans to improve their own lives and to expand their opportunities to fully participate in American social, economic and political life.

As an organization concerned with empowering African Americans to realize their full social, economic and political potential, it is critical that BLF's constituents have access to affordable, advanced communication services. More importantly, African Americans should not just be consumers of products and services they should be partners with providers and employees of providers as well. The NAACP, one of BLF's member organizations, measures selected industries for their record in employment, advertising and marketing, contracting and business development, philanthropy and service deployment within the African American market and with African American consumers.

Verizon has consistently received an overall grade of at least a "B" since the NAACP began grading the communications industry. MCI and its predecessor WorldCom, Inc. consistently received grades averaging "C to C+". BLF encourages the combined company to harness its financial might of nearly \$2 billion to provide ALL communities with the next generation of

affordable, advance communications technology AND improve upon its positive record of supplier and job diversity, contacting and advertising in African American media.

In closing, BLF is confident that the combined company is committed to leveraging its formidable resources so that all Americans will have access to affordable new products and services. In addition, BLF will partner with the combined company to ensure that African American consumers, workers, and vendors will be empowered to be fully integrated in our Digital Age. Accordingly, BLF urges you to approve the applications for consent for transfer of control. On behalf of its member organizations, BLF thanks you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joe Leonard

Dr. Joe Leonard

Director

Black Leadership Forum

cc: The Honorable Kevin J. Martin, Chairman
The Honorable Kathleen Q. Abernathy, Commissioner
The Honorable Michael J. Copps, Commissioner
The Honorable Jonathan S. Adelstein, Commissioner