

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Connect America Fund)	WC Docket No. 10-90
)	
A National Broadband Plan for our Future)	GN Docket No. 09-51
)	
Establishing Just and Reasonable Rates for Local Exchange Carriers)	WC Docket No. 07-135
)	
High-Cost Universal Service Support)	WC Docket No. 05-337
)	
Developing an Unified Intercarrier Compensation Regime)	CC Docket No. 01-92
)	
Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service)	CC Docket No. 96-45
)	
Lifeline and Link-Up)	WC Docket No. 03-109
)	
<u>Universal Service Reform – Mobility Fund</u>)	WT Docket No. 10-208

THE ALASKA RURAL COALITION’S PETITION FOR LIMITED WAIVER

I. Introduction.

The Alaska Rural Coalition¹ (“ARC”) hereby requests a limited waiver of the new call signaling rules issued by the Federal Communications Commission (“Commission”) on November 18, 2011 in the *USF/ICC Transformation Order* (“*Transformation Order*”).² The ARC Companies concur with Alaska Communications Systems Group, Inc. (“ACS”) and General Communication, Inc. (“GCI”) that Alaska’s network infrastructure make compliance with the Commission’s call signaling rules very difficult and prohibitively expensive.³ Wherever technically and practically feasible, the ARC companies will comply with the rules, but where existing network limitations make compliance infeasible, the ARC member companies respectfully request a waiver of the Commission rules contained in 47 C.F.R. § 64.1601(1)-(2).

The ARC membership consists of nearly all of the rate of return incumbent rural local exchange carriers (“RLECs”) in Alaska. The ARC member companies share similar network

¹ The ARC is composed of Alaska Telephone Company, Alaska Power & Telephone, Inc., Alaska Power & Telephone Long Distance, Inc., Arctic Slope Telephone Association Cooperative, Inc., Arctic Slope Telephone Association Cooperative Long Distance LLC, Bettles Telephone, Inc., Bristol Bay Cellular Partnership, Bristol Bay Telephone Cooperative, Inc., Bush-Tell, Inc., Circle Telephone & Electric, LLC, Cordova Telephone Cooperative, Inc., Copper Valley Telephone Cooperative, Inc., Copper Valley Wireless, Inc., Copper Valley Long Distance, Inc., City of Ketchikan, Matanuska Telephone Association, Inc., OTZ Telephone Cooperative, Inc., Interior Telephone Company, Mukluk Telephone Company, Inc., MTA Communications, LLC d/b/a MTA Wireless, MTA Communications, LLC d/b/a MTA Long Distance, North Country Telephone Inc., Nushagak Electric and Telephone Company, Inc., OTZ Telecommunications, Inc., The Summit Telephone and Telegraph Company, Inc., TelAlaska Long Distance, Inc., and Yukon Telephone Company, Inc.

² See *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90, *A National Broadband Plan for our Future*, Docket No. 09-51, *Establishing Just and Reasonable Rates for Local Exchange Carriers*, WC Docket No. 07-135, *High-Cost Universal Service Support*, WC Docket No. 05-337, *Developing an Unified Intercarrier Compensation Regime*, CC Docket No. 01-92, *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, CC Docket No. 96-45, *Lifeline and Link-Up*, WC Docket No. 03-109, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 11-161 (rel. Nov. 18, 2011) (“*Transformation Order*” and “*FNPRM*”).

³ See ACS Petition for Limited Waiver (filed Mar. 16, 2012) at 1-2; GCI Petition for Limited Waiver (filed Feb. 27 OR 28?, 2012) at 1-2.

architectures, and agree with ACS and GCI that all ETCs providing service in Remote Alaska face similar challenges in reconciling some of the existing signaling arrangements with the requirements in the new signaling rules.

II. The ARC's Requested Waiver is Necessary to Address Call Signaling and Routing Challenges.

Signaling System Seven ("SS7") is widely used in the lower-48 to route calls, but in Remote Alaska, infrastructure challenges, financial constraints and technological issues have precluded a universal adoption of SS7 for signaling. Most of the rural ILECs operating in Alaska have some component of their network that does not comply with the Commission's revised signaling requirements.⁴

The issues raised by GCI in its February 27, 2012 Petition for Limited Waiver and by ACS in its March 16, 2012 Petition for Limited Waiver accurately reflect the reality all Alaska carriers face when serving rural and remote areas of Alaska.⁵ The ARC member companies also must substitute its own data in lieu of the calling customer's data when relying upon long distance transport within its local service territory.⁶ ARC member companies also experience signaling challenges related to the provision of toll free calling on a wireless platform.⁷ To perform call forwarding and wireless roaming functions, the ARC member companies use data fields available in signaling to properly assign the cost of the service to the called party rather

⁴ See 47 C.F.R. § 64.1601(a)(1)-(2).

⁵ See GCI Petition For Limited Waiver at 2-6; ACS Petition for Limited Waiver at 2-6.

⁶ See GCI Petition For Limited Waiver at 2-3 (describing the network architecture in Alaska and how the lack of a LATA tandem and ubiquitous local exchange carrier transport facilities require carriers to use long distance facilities to complete local calls between remote villages).

⁷ See GCI Petition For Limited Waiver at 3-4 (describing necessity to use the Charge Number field to track the transport for accurate billing).

than the unsuspecting calling party.⁸ ARC member companies, ACS and GCI all rely on traditional MF signaling in many areas of rural and remote Alaska.⁹ The technical limitations of MF signaling are incompatible with the Commission's new signaling rules and could create potentially substantial privacy issues.

Granting the ARC member companies the same type of waiver sought by ACS and GCI for rural and Remote Alaska serves the public interest. The arguments articulated by ACS and GCI are directly applicable to the rural ILECs, since they represent the other half of the equation. Where compliance is not currently technically feasible and would cause substantial hardship to the ARC member companies and their customers, a limited waiver would allow scarce resources to continue to support essential core services.¹⁰ The intent of the Commission's new call signaling rules were to address the issue of phantom traffic, but the financial, technical and practical obstacles to compliance far outweigh the minimal benefit that might be achieved in Alaska.¹¹ Like ACS and GCI, the ARC respectfully requests a waiver to permit its member companies to "continue to evaluate its compliance with the new rules, develop remediation plans, and seek further additional waivers as appropriate."¹²

III. Conclusion.

The Alaska telecommunications network architecture differs substantially from the majority of the country. The signaling protocols used in rural and Remote Alaska do not reflect

⁸ See GCI Petition For Limited Waiver at 4-5 (describing the use of the CN field to bill the called party for charges incurred with call forwarding and wireless roaming rather than allowing those charges to fall to the calling party who does not know or expect that a local call would be incurring potentially substantial fees).

⁹ See GCI Petition For Limited Waiver at 5; ACS Petition for Limited Waiver at 5-6.

¹⁰ See ACS Petition for Limited Waiver at 6-7.

¹¹ See *USF/ICC Transformation Order* at para. 710, *et seq.*

¹² See GCI Petition For Limited Waiver at 7.

