

STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE

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April 21, 2006

RE: A Consumer Report For Telecommunications Providers

To Whom It May Concern:

The Commission discussed consumer protections at length in its April 11, 2006 Policy Statement and Order and directed staff "to design a voluntary process that would publicly identify the protections each intermodal provider agrees to offer."¹

The Commission noted that identification of carriers providing essential protections could be accomplished by developing a Consumer Report, as first proposed by staff in its White Paper. The Commission directed staff to develop the Consumer Report in a way that would be most useful to consumers, noting that cooperation from all service providers is very important for the effort to be successful.

Staff's preliminary view is that such a Report could be posted on the Department's website, and updated periodically. It might include availability of essential public health and safety protections such as 911 capabilities, compliance with federal wiretapping requirements (CALEA), per call and all call blocking capability and end user blocking capability for local chatlines and/or pay-per-call services. In addition, the Report could list the availability of additional consumer protections such as slamming/cramming protections, a company's privacy policy, notification of rights, including notification of termination, 24-hour outage reporting, a procedure for disputing bills, and access to and provisions for special needs consumers.² The report could also include whether consumer-friendly features such as online bill payment are available, complaint filing information and opportunity for website feedback.

¹ 05-C-0616 Proceeding on Motion of the Commission to Examine Issues Related to the Transition to Intermodal Competition in the Provision Telecommunication Services, Statement of Policy on Further Steps Toward Competition in the Intermodal Telecommunications Market and Order Allowing Rate Filings. (issued April 11, 2006). Intermodal carriers include incumbent local exchange carriers, competitive local exchange carriers, cable-IP providers, voice-over-broadband providers, and wireless carriers.

² Due to its extreme volatility, staff does not propose that rate information be provided in the Consumer Report. With company permission, however, we will provide links to the companies participating in the Report so that consumers can identify, through the companies' own websites, the rate plans most suitable to their needs. Staff would have no control, however, over the posting of rates.

In order to initiate the process of developing and implementing a Consumer Report Staff proposes to meet with interested parties at 10:30 A.M. on May 18, 2006, in the 19th Floor Boardroom of the Commission's Albany offices. Staff will present its preliminary vision of what a useful Consumer Report might look like and will seek feedback on its proposals. Alternate proposals and ideas for alternate proposals are welcome from any interested parties at any time prior to this meeting.

Questions and/or proposals prior to May 18th may be directed to Paula Adams of the Office of Telecommunications at (518) 474-4511. We look forward to seeing you on the 18th.

Sincerely,

Robert H. Mayer, Director
Office of Telecommunications