



Department of Justice

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AT
(202) 616-2771
TDD (202) 514-1888

**JUSTICE DEPARTMENT URGES FCC TO TAKE BOLD STEPS
TO PROMOTE LOCAL TELEPHONE COMPETITION**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The Department of Justice filed comments today with the Federal Communications Commission urging the agency to take bold steps to promote local telephone competition throughout the U.S. by establishing clear national rules on interconnection and access to local telephone company networks and ensuring that competitors will be charged reasonable prices for both.

The Department's Antitrust Division filed the comments as part of the FCC's rulemaking process to implement provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 which requires local telephone companies to make their facilities and services available to new competitors so that those competitors can enter monopoly telephone markets.

Anne K. Bingaman, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Department's Antitrust Division, said, "Consumers want to see the lower prices and better services that local telephone competition can bring. We urge the FCC to act to ensure that this competition will develop quickly, as they implement the new Telecommunications Act."

The Department urged the FCC to:

- Establish clear national rules governing the basic prerequisites for successful entry by local competitors.
- Ensure that entrants would have access to all technically feasible points of interconnection with local telephone company networks, and all technically feasible elements of the networks.
- Ensure that access to interconnection and network elements is available at economically reasonable prices.
- Avoid subjecting new entrants to unnecessary regulatory restrictions.
- Move quickly, with the states, to develop new approaches for ensuring universal service in a competitive environment.

"Competition in telecommunications in the past decade has produced enormous benefits for American consumers," said Bingaman. "However, consumers still don't have choices when they buy their local telephone service. It's time to give them a choice."

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