WIRELINE COMPETITION BUREAU ANNOUNCES EFFECTIVE DATES OF LIFELINE RULES FOLLOWING APPROVAL BY THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

WC Docket Nos. 11-42, 09-197, 10-90

On June 22, 2015, the Federal Communications Commission released a Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Order on Reconsideration, Second Report and Order, and Memorandum Opinion and Order that modified the reporting requirements of the Lifeline program (2015 Lifeline Reform Order). The 2015 Lifeline Reform Order built upon the successful reforms from the 2012 Lifeline Reform Order, which substantially strengthened protections against waste, fraud, and abuse and improved program administration and accountability. The Commission also wanted to ensure that adequate controls are in place before implementing any further changes to the Lifeline program. As part of these efforts, the Commission adopted several rules in the 2015 Lifeline Reform Order to strengthen the document retention requirements, ensure that only ETCs directly serving low-income customers receive reimbursement under the Lifeline program, and require ETCs to use a uniform snapshot date to request reimbursement from USAC for the provision of Lifeline support.

On January 5, 2016, the Commission received Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval of modified information collection requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA). The announcement of OMB approval of the rules will be sent to the Federal Register on February 4, 2016. As ordered in the 2015 Lifeline Reform Order, all adopted rules contained in the order will take effect upon announcement in the Federal Register of OMB approval. Therefore, parties should expect these rules to become effective on or after February 4, 2016.

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3 2015 Second Reform Order, 30 FCC Rcd at 7820-21, para. 3.

4 Id. at 7925-29, Appx. B.


6 2015 Second Reform Order, 30 FCC Rcd 7917, para. 299.
Specifically, the following rules will take effect:

- Updating the definition of eligible telecommunications carriers, direct service, and Lifeline;\(^7\)
- Updating instructions and number of respondents for FCC Forms 497 and 481;\(^8\)
- Retaining eligibility documentation for enrollment and dispute resolution;\(^9\)
- Revising the burden for consumer recertification;\(^10\)
- Revising FCC Form 555 for annual reporting of subscriber recertification;\(^11\)
- Requiring a uniform snapshot date for payment of low-income support;\(^12\)
- Revising the subscriber usage requirement;\(^13\)
- Requiring marketing and outreach plans;\(^14\)
- Updating the ETC audit requirements;\(^15\)
- Allowing electronic signatures for Lifeline subscriber certifications;\(^16\)

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