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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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ADDITIONAL TELEPHONE TRUTH-IN-BILLING REQUIREMENTS BECOME EFFECTIVE

Phone Bills Now Must Highlight New Service Providers and Prominently Display Contact Information for Consumer Inquiries

Washington, DC – Today, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced the effective date of truth-in-billing rules that were modified in a March 2000 Order on Reconsideration. Specifically, the requirement that telephone bills highlight any change in service providers, including notification of new services, and the requirement that bills display contact information for consumer inquiries will go into effect on Monday, August 28, 2000.

Consumer confusion over telephone bills has significantly contributed to telecommunications fraud such as slamming (the unauthorized change in a consumer's telecommunications carrier) and cramming (the placement of unauthorized charges on a consumer's telephone bill). To address this problem, the FCC adopted in April 1999 binding principles and guidelines for telephone bills intended to reduce fraud by making telephone bills easier for consumers to read and understand. This, in turn, will make slamming and cramming easier to detect and report.

The rules adopted in the April 1999 *Truth-in-Billing and Billing Format Order* required telephone companies:

- (1) to identify the service provider, and to highlight on the bill any new providers that did not bill for service in the previous billing cycle for that service provider;
- (2) to provide full and non-misleading descriptions of charges that appear on telephone bills;
- (3) to provide contact information for customers to use in order to lodge a complaint or to obtain information about any charge contained on the bill;
- (4) to identify on bills charges for which failure to pay will not result in disconnection of the customer's basic, local service; and,
- (5) to use standardized labels on bills when referring to certain line item charges relating to federal regulatory action, such as the PICC, local number portability, and subscriber line charge.

Most of these rules took effect in November 1999 and April 2000, although some did not because of reconsideration petitions and Y2K concerns. With the highlighting provision and the displaying of contact information becoming effective on August 28, 2000, the only pending issues remaining from the *Truth-in-Billing and Billing Format* Order are (1) specific, standard labels for line-item charges and (2) the application of truth-in-billing rules to Commercial Mobile Radio Service (CMRS) carriers.

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