

NEWS

News media Information 202 / 418-0500

TTY 202 / 418-2555

Fax-On-Demand 202 / 418-2830

Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>
<ftp.fcc.gov>

Federal Communications Commission

445 12th Street, S.W.

Washington, D. C. 20554

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. Cir. 1974).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

December 19, 2002

NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:

Michael Balmoris 202-418-0253

Email: mbalmori@fcc.gov

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION AUTHORIZES BELL SOUTH TO PROVIDE LONG DISTANCE SERVICE IN FLORIDA AND TENNESSEE

BellSouth Becomes First Bell Operating Company to Obtain Authority for Long Distance Service Throughout its Region

Washington, D.C. – Today, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced that it voted to approve BellSouth's joint application to provide in-region, interLATA service originating in Florida and Tennessee. Approval of BellSouth's application promises benefits to consumers in Florida and Tennessee by making increased competition in all markets for telecommunications services possible.

BellSouth stated in its application that competing carriers provide approximately 1.3 million lines in Florida, which account for 18% of the total lines in the state, and nearly 364 thousand lines in Tennessee, accounting for nearly 13% of the total lines in the state. With the FCC's approval of BellSouth's joint application for Florida and Tennessee and SBC's application for California, which was also adopted today, the percentage of Bell Operating Company (BOC) lines approved for in-region, interLATA service reached 68.3%.

With the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (1996 Act), Congress envisioned fundamental, pro-competitive changes in the telecommunications markets by making a BOC's entry into the long distance market subject to it first opening its local service market to competition. A BOC satisfies this contingency by demonstrating compliance with section 271 of the 1996 Act. After a BOC files a section 271 long distance application with the FCC, the FCC has 90 days to determine whether a BOC has taken the statutorily required steps to open its local telecommunications markets to competition, including compliance with the 1996 Act's 14-point 'competitive checklist' in section 271.

Since the passage of the 1996 Act, the FCC has denied five long distance applications and now has approved applications to provide in-region, long distance service in 26 states. Additionally, applications for 16 states have been withdrawn. Currently, there are section 271 applications for 12 states – Qwest's joint application for Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Utah, Washington and Wyoming, and Verizon's joint application for Maryland, Washington DC, and West Virginia – pending before the Commission.

-- more --

A summary of all section 271 applications can be accessed at the following FCC web page:

www.fcc.gov/Bureaus/Common_Carrier/in-region_applications/

The FCC emphasizes that BellSouth must continue to comply with the section 271 checklist requirements, and the Commission has a number of enforcement tools at its disposal to ensure compliance, including imposing penalties or suspension of approval.

-FCC-

Docket No.: WC 02-307

Action by the Commission December 18, 2002, by Memorandum Opinion and Order (FCC 02-331). Chairman Powell and Commissioner Copps issuing separate statements; Commissioner Adelstein not participating.

Wireline Competition Bureau Staff Contact: Christine Newcomb at 202-418-1580.

News about the Federal Communications Commission can also be found on the Commission's web site www.fcc.gov.