



NEWS

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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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FCC COMMISSIONERS MICHAEL J. COPPS AND JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN CALL FOR SECTION 271 ENFORCEMENT FOLLOW-THROUGH

Washington, D.C.—Commissioners Michael J. Copps and Jonathan S. Adelstein reacted today to the release of the Commission’s final decision granting a Bell Operating Company permission to enter the long-distance market: “Today’s decision is one for the history books. By granting Qwest authority to provide in-region, long-distance service in Arizona, we complete a cycle of state-by-state review of local competition that was set in motion by Congress in 1996.

“But this is in no way the end of the process, because the real challenge is just beginning. We must put in place a rigorous and sustained monitoring process to ensure continued compliance with the market-opening requirements of Section 271. We are mistaken if we think that competition is guaranteed forever by our decisions—at best, it is only enabled.

“Our enforcement practice in this area has been little more than requiring Bell Operating Companies to provide the Commission with performance data for the first year following long-distance authorization. This is a lax way to go about ensuring continued compliance. If we keep to this course, we have stuck our heads in the sand, willfully blind to the possibility that problems may arise after the first-year of long distance entry. Competitors always are free to file complaints, but we believe Congress asked us to do more. After all, without effective monitoring, we may find that the old monopoly forces that led to the breakup of Ma Bell will be able to just piece themselves back together again.”

Under Section 271 of the Communications Act, Bell Operating Companies are prevented from offering in-region, long-distance service until they demonstrate that the local markets they serve are open to competition. Copps and Adelstein said: “Through the Section 271 process, we have unleashed a new era of competition, choice and innovation for American consumers. For consumers to continue to reap these benefits, the Commission will need to fortify its enforcement process to ensure local markets remain fully and irreversibly open to competition.”

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