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For Immediate Release

FCC PROPOSES TO ELIMINATE OUTDATED TARIFFING REGULATIONS AND SIMPLIFY CONSUMERS' TELEPHONE BILLS

Proposal Would Deregulate and Detariff Telephone Access Charges and Eliminate Confusing Line Items on Customers' Bills

WASHINGTON, March 31, 2020—The Federal Communications Commission today proposed to deregulate and detariff the end user interstate access charges currently included on consumers' and small businesses' local telephone bills. Today's proposal would also prohibit carriers from separately listing these charges on customers' bills. Eliminating these obscurely worded line items will make it easier for consumers to understand their telephone bills, compare prices among voice service providers, and better ensure that a voice service provider's advertised price is closer to the total price that appears on its customers' bills.

Consumers and businesses today continue to rapidly migrate away from traditional telephone service provided by incumbent local exchange carriers to a multitude of voice service options offered by providers of interconnected VoIP service, mobile and fixed wireless services, and over-the-top voice applications. In light of the sweeping changes in the competitive landscape for voice services over the past two-plus decades, many states have begun to deregulate the portion of local telephone service used to originate and terminate intrastate calls. And yet, the FCC continues to regulate the various end-user charges associated with interstate access service offered by incumbent local exchange carriers—"Telephone Access Charges" for short.

Consistent with the FCC's commitment to eliminate outdated and unnecessary regulations and to encourage efficient competition, today's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking proposes to eliminate prescriptive pricing regulation and require detariffing of all Telephone Access Charges—the Subscriber Line Charge, the Access Recovery Charge, the Presubscribed Interexchange Carrier Charge, the Line Port Charge, and the Special Access Surcharge. The Notice also proposes modifications to the FCC's truth-in-billing rules to explicitly prohibit carriers from assessing any separate Telephone Access Charges on customers' bills after those charges are deregulated and detariffed. Telephone Access Charges are difficult to understand, and the opaque way they are sometimes described on telephone bills reduces consumers' ability to compare the cost of different voice service offerings.

Action by the Commission March 31, 2020 by Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 20-40). Chairman Pai, Commissioners O'Rielly, Carr, Rosenworcel, and Starks approving. Commissioner O'Rielly issuing a separate statement.

WC Docket No. 20-71

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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. Cir. 1974).