

HB

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# HOUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

(11)

Date Referred: April 14, 1989

FURTHER REFERRALS:

Date of Committee Action: 5/4/89

The FINANCE Committee considered:

HB 28

HOUSE BILL NO. 28: [TELECOMMUNICATIONS OPERATOR SERVICES]  
 "An Act relating to telecommunications alternate operator services."

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- be replaced with CS HB 28 (Fin.)  the same title
- have attached amendment(s)  a new title
- do pass
- do not pass
- no recommendation
- individual recommendations
- additional referral to the \_\_\_\_\_ Committee

ADOPTS: \_\_\_\_\_ letter of intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(s):  
 (Dept)

APPROVES PREVIOUS: (Date/Dept)

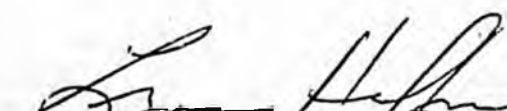
- fiscal impact \_\_\_\_\_
- zero fiscal note \_\_\_\_\_
- zero with analysis \_\_\_\_\_

- fiscal note(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- zero fiscal note(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- zero fn/analysis 4/14/89 APUC

**SIGNING DO PASS:**

**SIGNING:**  
 (Check approp. column)

		Do Not Pass	No Rec	Amend
<u>Ronald J. Larson</u> LARSON	<u>Thomas Barnes</u> BARNES	✓		
<u>Tom Huff</u> HUFFMAN	<u>Dick Shultz</u> SHULTZ	✓		
<u>Clay Swackhammer</u> SWACKHAMMER				
<u>Jay Brown</u> BROWN				
<u>Harjo</u> KOPONEN				
<u>J. Ulmer</u> ULMER				
<u>Robert Phillips</u> PHILLIPS				
<u>Steve Rieger</u> RIEGER				
<u>Kay Wallis</u> WALLIS				

  
 Chairman's Signature  
Ronald J. Larson

**FISCAL NOTE**

**REQUEST:**

Revision Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency Affected: Commerce & Econ. Development  
 Title: Act relating to telecommunications BRU: APUC  
alternate operator services.  
 Sponsor: Boucher Components: Operations  
 Requestor: House State Affairs

**EXPENDITURES/REVENUES: (Thousands of Dollars)**

OPERATING	FY 89	FY 90	FY 91	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94
PERSONAL SERVICES	0	0	0	0	0	0
TRAVEL	0	0	0	0	0	0
CONTRACTUAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
SUPPLIES	0	0	0	0	0	0
EQUIPMENT	0	0	0	0	0	0
LAND & STRUCTURES	0	0	0	0	0	0
GRANTS, CLAIMS	0	0	0	0	0	0
MISCELLANEOUS	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL OPERATING	0	0	0	0	0	0
CAPITAL	0	0	0	0	0	0
REVENUE	0	0	0	0	0	0

**FUNDING: (Thousands of Dollars)**

GENERAL FUND	0	0	0	0	0	0
FEDERAL FUNDS	0	0	0	0	0	0
OTHER	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	0

**POSITIONS:**

FULL-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME	0	0	0	0	0	0
TEMPORARY	0	0	0	0	0	0

If enacted, HB28 would create new disclosure obligations for companies providing "alternate operator services" as well as an enforcement role for the APUC. The bill, as written, would require the Commission to promulgate regulations and respond to indications of non-compliance (i.e. complaints, periodic spot checks etc.). Although there will be some incremental increase in workload, a direct fiscal impact is not anticipated at this time based on a minimum level of AOS activity.

Prepared by: T.S. Moninski II, Executive Director Phone: 276-6222  
 Division: Alaska Public Utilities Commission Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by Commissioner: [Signature] Date: 2/14/89  
 Agency: Commerce & Economic Development

Distribution (by preparer):  
 Legislative Finance  
 Legislative Sponsor  
 Requestor  
 Office of Management and Budget  
 Impacted Agency(ies)

**RECEIVED**

FEB 15 1989

page \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

LEGISLATIVE FINANCE

Original sponsor: Boucher

1 IN THE HOUSE

BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

2 CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 28 (Finance)

3 IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

4 SIXTEENTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

5 A BILL

6 For an Act entitled: "An Act relating to telecommunications alternate  
7 operator services."

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

9 \* Section 1. FINDINGS. The legislature finds that a growing number of  
10 companies provide, in a nonresidential setting, telecommunications services  
11 necessary to long distance service without disclosing the services provided  
12 or the cost. The legislature finds that providing these services to con-  
13 sumers without disclosing the cost or fact of providing them is a deceptive  
14 trade practice.

15 \* Sec. 2. AS 42.05 is amended by adding a new section to read:

16 Sec. 42.05.325. REGISTRATION AND REGULATION OF ALTERNATE OPERA-  
17 TOR SERVICES. (a) An alternate operator service may not operate in  
18 the state until it has registered and filed its tariffs with the  
19 commission. The application for registration must include the ser-  
20 vice's name, the address of its principal place of business, and the  
21 name and address of each of the officers of the service.

22 (b) An alternate operator shall identify the entity that is  
23 providing the alternate operator service and the cost of the service  
24 before the consumer incurs a charge for the call. If requested, the  
25 alternate operator shall transfer or assist in the transfer of the  
26 consumer's call to the consumer's carrier of choice. The consumer may  
27 not be charged for the transfer. The service shall also post on or  
28 near the telephone instruments subject to the alternate operator  
29 service information indicating that the consumer may have access to

1 the carrier the consumer prefers to use at no additional charge.

2 (c) In this section, "alternate operator service"

3 (1) means a connection to intrastate or interstate long-  
4 distance telecommunications facilities from a nonresidential location  
5 in the state including a hotel, motel, hospital, or customer-owned pay  
6 telephone, or from a place where business from consumers is aggre-  
7 gated, by a person that does not own any of the telecommunications  
8 facilities being connected through the service;

9 (2) does not include an intrastate or interstate long-  
10 distance carrier that contracts for operator services and charges  
11 rates for those services that are no greater than the rates charged by  
12 long-distance carriers regulated by the Alaska Public Utilities Com-  
13 mission or by the Federal Communications Commission.

14 \* Sec. 3. AS 45.50.471(b) is amended by adding a new paragraph to read:

15 (29) failing to comply with AS 45.50.473.

16 \* Sec. 4. AS 45.50 is amended by adding a new section to read:

17 Sec. 45.50.473. DISCLOSURE OF COSTS OF ALTERNATE OPERATOR SER-  
18 VICES. (a) A person may not provide an alternate operator service  
19 without disclosing to the consumer before a charge is incurred the  
20 cost of the service provided by the person and the identity of the  
21 person providing those services. This section does not affect the  
22 power of the Alaska Public Utilities Commission to regulate providers  
23 of alternate operator services under AS 42.05 in a manner consistent  
24 with this section.

25 (b) A violation of this section constitutes an unfair or decep-  
26 tive act or practice under AS 45.50.471. Notwithstanding AS 45.50.-  
27 531(a), it is presumed that actual damages to the consumer are equal  
28 to the cost of the service provided plus \$200. Additional damages  
29 must be proved.

1 (c) In this section, "alternate operator service" has the mean-  
2 ing given in AS 42.05.325(c).

3 \* Sec. 5. AS 45.50.481 is amended to read:

4 Sec. 45.50.481. EXEMPTIONS. Nothing in AS 45.50.471 - 45.50.561  
5 applies to

6 (1) an act or transaction regulated under laws administered  
7 by the state, by a regulatory board or commission except as provided  
8 by AS 45.50.471(b)(27) and (29), or officer acting under statutory  
9 authority of the state or of the United States, unless the law regu-  
10 lating the act or transaction does not prohibit the practices declared  
11 unlawful in AS 45.50.471;

12 (2) an act done by the publisher, owner, agent, or employee  
13 of a newspaper, periodical or radio or television station in the  
14 publication or dissemination of an advertisement, when the owner,  
15 agent or employee did not have knowledge of the false, misleading or  
16 deceptive character of the advertisement or did not have a direct  
17 financial interest in the sale or distribution of the advertised  
18 product or service;

19 (3) an act or transaction regulated under AS 21.36 or  
20 AS 06.05 or a regulation adopted under the authority of those chap-  
21 ters.

A M E N D M E N T

OFFERED IN THE HOUSE

TO: CSHB 28 (State Affairs)

Page 1, after line 14:

Insert a new bill section to read:

"\* Sec. 2. AS 42.05 is amended by adding a new section to read:

Sec. 42.05.325. REGISTRATION AND REGULATION OF ALTERNATE OPERATOR SERVICES. (a) An alternate operator service may not operate in the state until it has registered and filed its tariffs with the commission. The application for registration must include the service's name, the address of its principal place of business, and the name and address of each of the officers of the service.

(b) An alternate operator shall identify the entity that is providing the alternate operator service and the cost of the service before the consumer incurs a charge for the call. If requested, the alternate operator shall transfer or assist in the transfer of the consumer's call to the consumer's carrier of choice. The alternate operator service may not impose a charge for the assistance or transfer. The service shall also post on or near the telephone instruments subject to the alternate operator service information indicating that the consumer may have access to the carrier the consumer prefers to use at no additional charge."

Renumber the following bill sections accordingly.

**HB 28  
SPONSOR STATEMENT**

HB 28 is a consumer protection bill.

It is designed to protect telephone consumers from unexpected supplementary charges when using telephones from hotels, hospitals, commercially owned pay phones or other non residential location.

The unexpected supplementary charges are due to "unbundling" of the services that were formerly provided by "integrated" or "packaged" rates under the old AT&T, Bell System. Divestiture and deregulation at the national level has allowed a variety of middle men to specialize in providing services that were formerly provided by AT&T for one cost. As the variety of services has become unbundled, the supplementary charges usually associated with hotel telephone service has become known as AOS, (Alternative Operator Services).

Eleven states have already taken action to curb "check-out shock" which occurs from these unexpected charges at hotels. The National Association of Utility Commissioners has passed a resolution encouraging advance notice to the public for these charges.

HB 28 gives APUC authority to regulate AOS. It also makes failure to comply with this proposed law a violation of the Unfair Trade Practices and Consumer Protection law punishable by a presumptive \$200 fine.

Both APUC and the Department of Law support the bill and have offered amendments which have to be coordinated and will be presented to the Committee tomorrow.

*Approved*

A M E N D M E N T

OFFERED IN THE HOUSE

TO: CSHB 28 (State Affairs)

Page 1, after line 14:

Insert a new bill section to read:

"\* Sec. 2. AS 42.05 is amended by adding a new section to read:

Sec. 42.05.325. REGISTRATION AND REGULATION OF ALTERNATE OPERATOR SERVICES. (a) An alternate operator service may not operate in the state until it has registered and filed its tariffs with the commission. The application for registration must include the service's name, the address of its principal place of business, and the name and address of each of the officers of the service.

(b) An alternate operator shall identify the entity that is providing the alternate operator service and the cost of the service before the consumer incurs a charge for the call. If requested, the alternate operator shall transfer or assist in the transfer of the consumer's call to the consumer's carrier of choice. The consumer may not be charged for the transfer. The service shall also post on or near the telephone instruments subject to the alternate operator service information indicating that the consumer may have access to the carrier the consumer prefers to use at no additional charge.

(c) In this section, "alternate operator service"

(1) means a connection to intrastate or interstate long-distance telecommunications facilities from a nonresidential location

in the state including a hotel, motel, hospital, or customer-owned pay telephone, or from a place where business from consumers is aggregated, by a person that does not own any of the telecommunications facilities being connected through the service;

(2) does not include an intrastate or interstate long-distance carrier that contracts for operator services and charges rates for those services that are no greater than the rates charged by long-distance carriers regulated by the Alaska Public Utilities Commission or by the Federal Communications Commission."

Renumber the following bill sections accordingly.

Page 2, line 2, after "service"", through line 7:

Delete all material.

Insert "has the meaning given in AS 42.05.325(c)."

# Congressmen Ask FCC To Monitor Services

BY KATHLEEN KILLETTE

WASHINGTON — House lawmakers last week called for more FCC involvement in policing the burgeoning market for so-called "alternative" operator services.

Members of the House Telecommunications Subcommittee blasted the practices of operator service providers, who have been hounded by more than 2,000 consumer complaints to the FCC. The complaints generally involve the providers' failure to notify callers of their rates and/or identities, blocking access to other carriers, and charging for incomplete calls.

AT&T's director of product management, Gerald Hines, noted that AT&T is considering whether to introduce an "800" toll-free number to combat the call-blocking problem.

Operator service providers typically compete for the long distance traffic generated by "call aggregators"—such as hotels and hospitals—that make coin-operated and non-coin-operated phones available to their patrons.



Rep. Markey: Some providers act like 'muggers.'

Currently, certain call aggregators who have chosen an operator service provider block callers' access to other carriers' "1-0-NXX" dialing codes. For example, a caller wanting to use AT&T must dial 1-0-288 and then the area code and number. AT&T sources said an 800 code could solve that problem because the aggregators typically do not

block access to 800 numbers.

Comparing the practices of some operator service providers to "muggers," House Telecommunications Subcommittee Chairman Edward Markey, D-Mass., voiced strong support for legislation written by Rep. Jim Cooper, D-Tenn.

The bill would require operator service providers to post written notices about rates, answer callers' questions about rates and complaint procedures, refrain from blocking access to other carriers, refrain from charging for incomplete calls, and charge "just and reasonable" rates.

But FCC Common Carrier Bureau Chief Gerald Brock told the panel that the legislation may "tie the commission's hands."

## FCC Action Inadequate

Last July, two consumer groups—the Washington-based Telecommunications Research Action Council (TRAC) and San Francisco-based Consumer Action—filed a complaint against five operator service providers. (Operators, Cont. on Page 63)

# FTS-2000 Rates: Cheap By

BY KATHLEEN KILLETTE

WASHINGTON — AT&T's tariffed rates for the federal government's FTS-2000 network continue to puzzle, but one thing is becoming clear: They could be a bargain next to rates for comparable services AT&T offers users in the private sector.

The recently released data show that

FTS-2000 users might enjoy rates that are half those paid by customers of AT&T's regular switched voice services and by users of the existing government network, the Federal Telecommunications System. Rates for the FTS network are not public, but some sources say AT&T may be charging more than 20 cents per minute.

The company's rates for the Federal Telecommunications System 2000 were

unveiled in a matter the FCC late last Services Administers the FTS-2000 data to set rates that will pay for voice offered by the nationsWeek, April

The rates the 2000 also will de

# NTIA Recommends Ending Ban O

BY KATHLEEN KILLETTE

WASHINGTON — The National Telecommunications and Information Administration has urged Congress to lift the manufacturing ban on the regional Bell holding

panies have appealed that ruling to the U.S. Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit

The NTIA found that the United States' trade the high-tech area's narrowest category—"communications equipment"—deteriorated to an estimated billion deficit in 1988 from a \$530 million surplus

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earnings that year.

AT&T's gross revenue, according to the tariff, is expected to be roughly \$47.5 million. Thus, AT&T would reap average revenue of about 5 cents per minute on a nationwide, averaged basis. The per-minute revenue will vary, depending on the user's volume of traffic and traffic routes.

As for expenses in the switched-services category, AT&T told the FCC that it expects to record total after-tax expenses of \$44.756 million. This figure includes estimated access costs of nearly \$23 million.

#### Private-Line Rates

Regarding private-line rates, AT&T estimated that it will reap \$73 million in revenue during FTS-2000's first full year of operation. AT&T also told the FCC that it expects to operate roughly 2,500 circuits on the network.

AT&T's after-tax expenses in the private-line category are expected to total more than \$47 million in 1991. Of this amount, access expenses will be roughly \$9.2 million. Total investment for private-line plant and services will be approximately \$63,518 in 1991.

AT&T will record net earnings of about \$25.8 million in this category for FTS-2000 in 1991, according to the tariff.

#### Investment & Access Costs

AT&T told the FCC that its total investment for switched services will be only \$400,000 in FTS-2000's first full year. Considering that a single switch can cost millions of dollars, AT&T apparently is not citing—at least for year one—investment in any facilities other than

last fall, AT&T said the 183 million minutes of traffic it expects to generate via that plan will require nearly \$8 million of investment for plant-in-service.

Compared with that ratio, the \$400,000 investment for 930 million minutes of switched traffic over FTS-2000 becomes all the more striking.

But that investment "does not track to those minutes," an AT&T spokesman said of the 930 million minutes of

switched-services use.

"It's like apples and oranges," the spokesman said, adding that "a lot of these minutes are carried over portions of the network that do not use the same facilities associated with switched services." He said some of the switched traffic may be carried over private-line facilities. There are numerous instances of dedicated access between the customer's location and AT&T's end office, according to the spokesman.

If AT&T's access expenses are roughly \$23 million for 930 million minutes, the average per-minute switched-access cost would be 2.47 cents.

But in a Jan. 12, 1989, letter to the FCC, AT&T said the switched-access costs through 1994 for a regular switched 10-mile call would be 3.51 cents per minute for originating access and 3.51 cents per minute for terminating access, for a total of 7.02 cents per minute.

Yet access charges—the fees imposed by telephone companies on long distance carriers—are declining. It is unclear how AT&T arrived at the 2.47 cent-per-minute figure for FTS-2000 in 1991 while predicting that it will pay nearly triple that in 1994 for the same type of switched services.



## Reps. Blast Operator Services

*(Operators, Cont. from Page 12)*

The FCC issued an order in February stating that it did not have enough evidence to act on the groups' claims that the companies' rates were unreasonable. But the FCC ordered all operator service providers to identify themselves to callers, post their rates and refrain from call blocking.

These actions, however, have not appeased the agency's critics. "I remain unconvinced that the market alone will solve the problem of overcharging," Markey said.

Brock said the burden of proving that an operator services' rate is unreasonable rests on the consumer, who can complain to the FCC.

Tennessee Public Service

Commissioner Steven Hewlett disagreed, saying that making the consumer prove that a rate is unlawful is "in itself, unjust and unreasonable." Markey then told Brock that the FCC "has a higher responsibility" to ensure that rates are reasonable.

Cooper called the FCC "distressingly naive" in its reliance on market forces to hold rates down.

Executives from two competing operator service providers—National Telephone Services Inc., Rockville, Md., and International Telecharge Inc., Dallas—noted that the industry is still in its infancy.

Brad Mutchelkanaus, secretary and general counsel of NTS,

said that while the legislation's goal's are "laudable," the bill fails to recognize that most operator service providers are given technically inferior access to telephone companies—which can result in charges for incomplete calls and other problems.

David Wagenhauser, staff attorney for TRAC, pointed out that on April 1, the Bell companies began sending out ballots to let call aggregators choose carriers other than AT&T to provide operator services for Bell-owned pay phones. Because these phones will be available to competing operator service providers, "the April Fools' Day joke could be on consumers" unless Congress passes legislation, he said.

# Travelers get phone bill of rights

By Mark Lewyn  
USA TODAY

The government is cracking down on long-distance companies that charge a small fortune to place a call from a hotel, airport or hospital phone.

Monday, the Federal Communications Commission told five companies that charge customers 20 percent to 80 percent more than AT&T, MCI or Sprint that they must inform callers of their costs.

The so-called "alternative operators" also must tell customers which company is placing the call before it goes through — and it can't block callers from using other long-distance carriers.

But the FCC decided not to regulate the firms' rates.

Until now, many callers using private pay phones were only finding out weeks later — when the phone bill arrived — that they were charged a premium for a phone call.

That has prompted complaints, particularly from business travelers. Response: Many hospitals, airports and hotels have stopped using them.

Among the firms cited in the FCC order: Central Corp., International Telecharge Inc., National Telephone Services Inc., Payline Systems Inc. and Telesphere Network Inc.

Right now, all these companies buy phone time from a major carrier such as AT&T and MCI and then give the hotel, airport or hospital that uses the service a cut of revenues.

The FCC also said Monday alternative operators must:

- ▶ Put a sticker on the phone with price information or tell the caller the price.
- ▶ Give callers a chance to hang up without any charge.

0001 . . . For Home



P.O. Box Y, State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-3100  
Mail Stop 3100  
(907) 465-3991

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
RESEARCH AGENCY

Item 4  
HB 28  
LAA 1.1

December 19, 1988

MEMORANDUM

TO: Representative H. A. (Red) Boucher

ATTN: Kathy Anders

FROM: Maria Gladziszewski *M. Gladziszewski*  
Legislative Analyst

RE: Telephone Surcharges Imposed by Hotels in Alaska  
Research Request 89.111 (Revised)

You expressed concern that consumers may be unaware of telephone surcharges imposed by businesses and requested information on the surcharge and disclosure practices of hotels in Alaska. Hotels and other businesses may apply surcharges to telephone rates and are not required to disclose surcharges to consumers. Both surcharges and disclosure practices vary from hotel to hotel. Alternative operator services have not yet been licenced by the Alaska Public Utility Commission (APUC) to deliver services on intrastate calls in Alaska and have not yet entered the interstate market (although they have the approval of the Federal Communications Commission to do so). This memorandum describes telephone billing systems and rate disclosure practices of selected hotels in Alaska.

Keeping Track of Calls Made

Hotels have telephone systems that provide information about each call placed. Systems used in Alaska include

- long distance operator services--an Alascom operator calls the hotel with time and charges after each call has been placed;
- autoquote service--an Alascom system that uses a receive-only printer at the hotel to print billing information about each call; and
- call detail recorders--machines that enable the hotel itself to keep track of calls made by guests.

JAN 18 Rec'd

89 RJ

Representative Boucher  
December 19, 1988  
Page 2

These methods allow the hotel to know how much each call costs the hotel. Guest billing is not dependent upon which method is used to track a call or upon the actual cost of the call.

### Billing Guests

Billing practices for long distance service vary from charging exactly what GCI or Alascom charges the hotel to adding a 40 percent surcharge. Some hotels charge a flat fee of \$.50 or \$1 per long distance call. Some hotels also charge for local calls. Of the hotels contacted, smaller hotels were more likely to offer free local calls and to charge the actual cost of long distance calls. Larger hotels were more likely to impose telephone surcharges.

A call detail recorder can be programmed to calculate charges in a variety of ways. The hotel, for example, can program the recorder to calculate telephone rates (either GCI or Alascom) plus a certain percentage. The call detail recorder at the Westmark in Juneau is programmed to charge all calls as day rate operator assisted calls and add a 10 percent surcharge. The variety of charge calculations is limited only by the ability of the programmer and the information available. If telephone rates change and a call detail recorder at a hotel is not updated, the hotel loses or makes money depending on whether telephone rates increased or decreased. Information programmed into a call detail recorder is not necessarily related to what GCI or Alascom actually charges for the service.

### Informing Guests

Practices for informing guests are as varied as surcharges. Most hotels do not print details of how charges are calculated; some provide printed guest information stating that surcharges are added. A representative from the Sheraton in Anchorage said that the inside of the telephone receiver handle in each of Sheraton's rooms displays a clear statement that a 40 percent surcharge is added to each call.

Representative Boucher  
December 19, 1988  
Page 3

The APUC has no record of complaints from hotel guests in Alaska about telephone service charges.<sup>1</sup> Because increased charges in Alaska hotels are not directly caused by telecommunications services but rather are the result of additional charges added by hotels, complaints should be directed to the hotel or to consumer advocate groups.

Attached are examples of guest information regarding telephone charges in a few Juneau hotels. Also attached are two recent articles on alternative operator services.

Please let us know if we can provide additional information.

Attachments

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<sup>1</sup> APUC representative Ray Wipperman did mention a complaint from someone who accepted a collect call placed from a pay telephone in another state. The coin-operated telephone was connected to an alternative operator service. The Alaskan accepting the call complained of receiving a bill three times what he considered normal for such a call. Complaints on interstate calls should be directed to the Chief of Informal Complaints of the Enforcement Division of the FCC, 2025 M Street, NW, Room 6202, Washington, DC, 20554.