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ALASKA FEDERAL-STATE JOINT BOARD TO
CONVENE A HEARING IN ANCHORAGE ALASKA ON
THURSDAY, JULY 1, 1993

CC DOCKET NO. 83-1376

Released: June 23, 1993

The Alaska Federal-State Joint Board in CC Docket 83-1376 will convene a hearing on Thursday, July 1, 1993, at 9:30 a.m. in Anchorage, Alaska (1:30 p.m. (EDT)). The hearing will be held to receive testimony from the citizens of Alaska and other interested persons on the following: (1) the Tentative Recommendation and Order Inviting Comments, FCC 93J-1, released by the Federal-State Joint Board on May 17, 1993; (2) the implementation plan filed by Alascom, Inc. on June 7, 1993; (3) the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) response filed on June 7, 1993; and (4) the AT&T Petition to Terminate the Joint Services Agreement (AT&T Customer Benefit Plan) filed March 31, 1993.

FCC Chairman Quello and FCC Commissioners Duggan and Barrett will participate by means of videoconference facilities in Washington, D.C. State Commissioners Susan Knowles (Alaska), Dean J. "Joe" Miller (Idaho), Bruce Hagen (North Dakota), and David Rolka (Pennsylvania) will also participate in the hearing.

The hearing will convene at the video conferencing facilities at 1049 W. 5th Ave., Anchorage, Alaska. Persons wishing to testify either in person or via audio links within the State of Alaska should contact Lorraine Kenyon, Alaska Public Utilities Commission, at (907) 276-6222. Space at the Anchorage videoconference facilities is limited. Members of the public interested in listening to the meeting may do so at the Alaska Public Utilities Commission, Public Hearing Room, Third Floor, 1016 W. 6th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska. In Washington, D.C., the public may listen to the meeting at the FCC, Room 856, 1919 M Street, N.W. Additional information concerning this hearing may be obtained from Lorraine Kenyon, Alaska Public Utilities Commission, at (907) 276-6222 or from Rose Crellin, Common Carrier Bureau, FCC, at (202) 632-1292.

Interested persons may also provide written testimony or other comments until July 12, 1993. An original and five copies should be filed with the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, 1919 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20554. Additional copies should be sent to the following: three copies to Peggy Reitzel, Common Carrier Bureau, Federal Communications Commission, 1919 M. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20554; and one copy to ITS, Inc. the Commission's contractor for public records duplication, 2100 M Street, N.W., Suite 140, Washington, D.C. 20037, (202) 857-3800. Comments will be available for inspection and photoduplication in Room 239, 1919 M. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20554, 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM Monday-Friday. Copies may additionally be obtained from ITS, Inc.

Parties should also send copies of filings to the following Alaska Joint Board Members and their staffs: Hon. Bruce Hagen, North Dakota Public Service Commission, State Capitol Building, Bismarck, North Dakota 58505; Hon. Susan M. Knowles, Alaska Public Utilities Commission, 1016 West 6th Avenue, Suite 400, Anchorage, Alaska 99501; Hon. Dean J. "Joe" Miller, Idaho Public Utilities Commission, 472 West Washington, Boise, Idaho 83702; Hon. David Rolka, Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission, P.O. Box 3265, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105; Lorraine Kenyon, Alaska Public Utilities Commission, 1016 West 6th Avenue, Suite 400, Anchorage, Alaska 99501; Eileen Benner, Idaho Public Utilities Commission, 472 West Washington, Boise, Idaho, 83702; Debra Kriete, Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission, P.O. Box 3265, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105; Ronald G. Choura, c/o Michigan Public Service Commission, 6545 Mercantile Way, P.O. Box 30221, Lansing, Michigan, 48910; and Rowland Curry, Texas Public Service Commission, 7800 Shoal Creek Blvd. Suite 400N, Austin, Texas 78757.

- FCC -

ALASKA JOINT BOARD PUBLIC HEARING

Anchorage & Washington, D.C.

7/1/93

Barbara Huff - Teamsters

- if it ain't broke don't fix it
- what is wrong with current arrangement?
- 1980 - AT&T agreed to the JSA
- MCI has entered the market
- where is the efficiency problem? Alascom employees are efficient
- Alascom has 80% of intrastate market
- what are the benefits of change in the market structure for Alaskans?
- Joint Board is not concerned regarding cost impacts on Alaskans
- Alaska economy is weak
- Joint Board need do nothing to change the market
- who is going to guarantee the proposed benefits
- no reason to depart from today's competitive market structure

Jack Anderson - State Chamber

- disaster if AT&T enters the Alaska market\
- 250 jobs of operators will be lost
- ancillary suppliers and services will be driven out of business by AT&T
- AT&T will wipe out the small locals, the PBX business
- Alascom supports many volunteer groups in Alaska
- We don't want Lear Jet management from Lower-48 or Bahamas
- JSA subsidy peanuts to AT&T

Roy Hundorf - CIRI (Alascom Board of Directors)

- most CIRI shareholders live below poverty line and he is concerned regarding action that would drive up their costs
- not enough notice on the Joint Board proposal - should postpone and add hearings in Alaska
- increased competition will not lead to lower prices for rural Alaska (it is a weak market)
- if it's working don't fix it
- troubled by abruptness of proceeding, lack of notice

Jeff Silverman - AFN

- affordable communication must continue
- don't want to be left out of the changes in telecommunications as they come

- rural residents are dependent on federal largess for many things for all goods and services
- in rural areas there is a greater dependency on smaller set of alternatives
- worried about withdrawal of service in rural areas

Julie Kafer - AFN

- communication vital in bush
- managed competition in health care won't work in the bush
- there will be "a lot of harm to our communities"

Rep. Eldon Mulder - East Anchorage District

- directed initiative campaign in favor of competition
- competition has worked in Alaska - prices have fallen and service has improved
- competition has been good for Alascom and GCI
- takes no position on AT&T proposal
- concerns regarding rural service were voiced against competition in the past and proved to be wrong

Lloyd Barber - President, Anchorage Communications Access TV Corp.

- there are rumors that AT&T entry into the market will cut off access to cable TV because AT&T is buying Prime Cable (note: this is incorrect)

Bonnie Jack - Political Consultant

- she is a community activist - objects to lack of notice of the hearing.
- strong advocate for competition
- loss of subsidy will hurt Alaskans; rates will rise
- she opposes wasteful duplication of electrical lines by _____ and MTA). In the same vein the Alascom fiber cable should not be duplicated by AT&T.

Willie Hensley - President of NANA, (Alascom Board of Directors)

- (Sen. Adams endorses his position)
- The Alaska bush is now tied to rest of world through telecommunications
 - timing and notice of the hearing were not adequate

- worst time for teleconference - rural Alaskans are working to survive
- danger of falling back from improvements in telecommunications made to date
- outside financial assistance is necessary for rural service.

Red Boucher -

- has been in contact with Joint Board on a number of occasions
- inquired of Commissioner whether there are plans for more hearings in Alaska before the issue resolved - Comm. Barrett's response not clear - left issue open
- Joint Board must hold hearings in Alaska
- offered to provide Larry Pearson studies performed for his legislative special committee on telecommunications
- cited wasteful duplication of cable capacity if AT&T builds its own facility
- concerned about future impact of technology on state

Sen. Kertulla -

- don't destroy a system that works well
- market forces didn't bring us modern telecom - it was Alascom and the State government - many battles with RCA and others
- what's the guarantee of future remote service
- don't give us more trouble, help us
- be careful with change - might lose something of value

Mike Poccarro - (Alascom Advertising Agency)

- carriers must serve the weakest and least able to pay
- he recounts experience with Marv Weatherly and building the bush communications network (says Alascom was not always willing to help develop the bush)
- competition is working now but would look carefully at further competition (from AT&T)
- what works in Lower 48 doesn't always work in Alaska
- this is very complex issue
- the Joint Board should have hearings in the bush
- give us information so we can help you

C.J. Zane - Holland America Lines/Westmark (testifying for Al Parrish, President)

- Westmark is heavy user of telecom
- concerned regarding brevity of notice for hearing and regarding impacts on rural service

- Joint Board must have guarantees, especially regarding intrastate service and possible rate increases.

Mike Elvindo - Pacific Rim Telecommunications

- couldn't get switched 56 kpbs service from Alascom or GCI
- AT&T doesn't appear ready to increase service further
- competition has been very effective in Alaska
- supports AT&T entry if rural Alaskans are taken care of

Ronald Duncan - GCI

- process has been underway for ten years
- when change is on horizon there are always calls for more study
- the Tentative Recommendation should be applied basically as proposed by the Joint Board
- GCI welcomes AT&T entry under the terms laid out by the Joint Board
- Tentative Recommendation good compromise and meets objectives set out nine years ago

D. Wilcox - General Manager for Alaska of AT&T

- everyone agrees present structure needs to change
- current Alaska market structure doesn't serve public interest
- there are 2 plans on the table
- the situation now is like farm animals about to be fed which are shouldering for position; comments of carriers focus on their own welfare and not that of the consumer
- AT&T's Consumer Benefit Plan will protect the bush which will benefit from rate reductions
- AT&T will buy the facilities (at net book value) at any location Alascom abandons
- AT&T fiber cable - 1) Alaska spur is full without compression, 2) AT&T fiber is state of the art
- duplication of facilities is inherent in the industry; you must always build ahead of demand
- price caps protect Alaskans from cost pass through due to construction of new facilities
- Comm. Miller asked Wilcox why AT&T failed to follow the J/B directive at ¶ 84 of the TR and file an implementation plan; he said AT&T has not complied with lawful requirements of order
- Wilcox responded that AT&T will not voluntarily pay Alascom any money - if ordered - will follow order
- Cable will take 3 years to build

- Wilcox said AT&T has studied whether there a way for ACR to be an investment for AT&T - we have studied extensively - can't find a way. Don't want to pay Alascom unless its an "Investment" for AT&T that will pay back.

John Ayers - GM Alascom

- there are proposals to eliminate JSA in favor of market forces; both fail to sustain service to all part of the State
- two proposals are subject to serious questions
- no one can explain consequences of implementation of the two plans
- Joint Board must preserve gains of the past and insure benefits in the future

7/93 Letter of Ketelyn Ohmer
7/93 Letter of Ashley Reed
7/93 Letter of Paul Reid (Sagaya Corp.)
7/93 Letter of Donald Long, Mayor of Barrow
7/93 Letter of Chuch Huntley, Huntley and Assoc.
7/93 Letter of Kevin Bruce, Northwest Strategies
7/93 Letter of Gov. Bill Sheffield
7/93 Letter of Abacus Computer Service
7/93 Letter of Carr Gottstein
7/93 Letter of Carr Gottstein (taking Back AT&T Endorsement)
7/93 Letter of C Graphics
7/93 Letter of Alissa Crandall
7/93 Letter of Cook Inlet Region Inc.
7/93 Letter of Details
7/93 Letter of Dennis DeWinter
7/93 Letter of Cathy Hart
7/93 Letter of Sen. George Jacko
7/93 Letter of Lynn Kenney
7/93 Letter of Kings Inn
7/93 Letter of Sen. Suzanne Little
7/93 Letter of Rep. Eileen MacLean
7/93 Letter of Microwave
7/93 Letter of Moonbeam Productions

7/93 Letter of Zoe Oakley
7/93 Letter of Production Plus
7/93 Letter of Brett Rawalt
7/93 Letter of Real Estate This Week
7/93 Letter of Tim Rittal
7/93 Letter of Seidl's Native Crafts
7/93 Letter of Sew Easy
7/93 Letter of Cindy Steward
7/93 Letter of Take Action Co.
7/93 Letter of Lisa Wolf
7/93 Letter of Donald Whit
7/93 Letter of Wayne Christainson, William Biller, John
and Judy Travlos, Joyce Powers, and Shannon Napier
7/93 Letter of Donna Weeks
7/93 Letter of Donald White
7/93 Letter of Larry McCormick
7/93 Letter of National Bank Of Alaska

ALASKA JOINT BOARD
CC DOCKET 83-1376

4/11/83	State of Alaska Petition for Rulemaking	1
6/03/83	State of Hawaii Statement in Support	2
6/03/83	Comments of Alascom	3
6/02/83	Comments of GCI	4
6/20/83	Reply Comments of Alascom	5
12/07/83	GCI Petition for Expedited Consideration and Related Interim Relief	6
12/16/83	State of Alaska and APUC Letter Request for Extension of Time	7
12/19/83	Comments of NTIA	8
12/19/83	GCI Letter requesting the FCC to deny the State's request for Extension of Time	9
12/27/83	Opposition of Alascom	10
12/27/83	Comments of AT&T on Petition for Expedited Consideration and Interim Relief	11
12/28/83	Comments of the State of Alaska and APUC	12
12/28/84	Motion of the State of Alaska and the APUC to Accept Late Filed Comments	13
1/04/84	<u>Notice of Inquiry</u>	14
1/6/84	GCI Letter to FCC re clarifying material	15
1/09/84	Reply Comments of GCI	16
1/9/84	Reply Comments of AT&T	17
1/16/84	FCC Letter re extension to file	18
1/26/84	FCC letter re Holding Petition in Abeyance	19
1/30/84	Opposition of AT&T To Letter Request of GCI	20
3/1/84	State of Alaska and APUC Motion for Extension of Time	21

3/6/84	FCC Order Extending Time	22
3/7/84	Comments of Hawaiian Telephone Co.	23
3/13/84	State of Alaska and APUC Further Motion for Extension of Time	24
3/13/84	Informal Comments of ACAP	25
3/14/84	FCC Order Further Extending Time	26
3/14/84	Comments of the NYNEX Cos.	27
3/14/84	Comments of ATU	28
3/14/84	Comments of SBS	29
3/14/84	Comments of Puerto Rico Tel. Co.	30
3/21/84	Comments of AT&T	31
3/21/84	Comments of the State of Hawaii	32
3/21/84	Comments of the State of Alaska	33
3/21/84	Comments of Alascom	34
3/22/84	Comments of GCI	35
3/29/84	GCI's Alternative Plan	36
4/10/84	State of Alaska Motion for Extension of Time	37
4/18/84	FCC Order Extending Time	38
5/2/84	GCI Motion for Extension of Time	39
5/4/84	FCC Order Extending Time	40
5/09/84	Reply Comments of Alascom	41
5/09/84	Reply Comments of AT&T	42
5/09/84	Reply Comments of GCI	43
5/9/84	Reply Comments of ATU	44
5/9/84	Reply Comments of Hawaiian Telephone Co.	45

5/9/84	Reply Comments of the State of Hawaii	46
5/9/84	Reply Comments of Puerto Rico Tel. CO.	47
5/10/84	Reply Comments of the State of Alaska and the APUC and Motion to Accept Late Filed Comments	48
5/10/84	GCI's Corrections to Reply Comments	49
6/4/84	GCI Letter to FCC re extension of Time	50
6/4/84	FCC Letter granting Extension	51
6/11/84	GCI Letter to FCC requesting additional extension of time	52
6/11/84	FCC Letter granting extension	53
7/2/84	FCC Letter granting additional extension	54
8/10/84	GCI Supplement to Petition for Expedited Consideration & Related Interim Relief	55
8/13/84	State of Alaska Request for Extension of Time	56
8/14/84	FCC Public Notice regarding filing dates	57
8/15/84	GCI Letter to FCC re Errata to Filing	58
8/16/84	Alascom Request for Extension of Time	59
8/17/84	AT&T Motion to Strike or in the Alternative for an Extension of Time	60
8/17/84	GCI letter opposing request for Extension of Time	61
8/20/84	GCI Opposition to Alascom Request for Extension of Time and AT&T Motion to Strike or in the Alternative for an Extension of Time	62
8/20/84	GCI Letter in Reply to Alascom's Opposition	63
8/21/84	FCC Order	64
8/30/84	Naftalin Service	65
9/04/84	Comments of Alascom on the Supplement filed by GCI	66

9/04/84	Response & Opposition of AT&T to Supplemental Request of GCI for Interim Relief	67
9/04/84	Comments of the State of Alaska	68
9/5/84	Comments of United Utilities	69
9/07/84	GCI's Consolidated Reply	70
9/07/84	Alascom Brief Response	71
9/7/84	Reply Comments of NTIA	72
9/10/84	GCI Appendices	73
9/12/84	Informal Comments of ACAP	74
9/12/84	Alascom Letter Requesting that the FCC consider Charles River Associates' Comments	75
9/14/84	State of Alaska and APUC letter to FCC re GCI Cash Flow	76
10/26/84	FCC News - Commission Directs Staff to Grant Relief to GCI	77
10/29/84	AT&T Supplement to Alascom to be Continued Final Step in Alaskan Rate Integration Postponed	78
12/11/84	<u>Memorandum Opinion & Order</u> (Alascom Order)	79
12/11/84	<u>Memorandum Opinion & Order</u> (GCI Order)	80
12/21/84	Motion of AT&T for A Stay of the GCI Order	81
12/21/84	AT&T Memorandum of Law in Support	82
12/21/84	AT&T Motion for Stay of the Alascom Order	83
12/21/84	AT&T Memorandum in Law of Support	84
12/21/84	AT&T Petition for Expedited Reconsideration of the Alascom Order	85
12/21/84	AT&T request for Expedited Action and Establishment of Timetable for Decision	86
12/26/84	Opposition of the State of Alaska and the APUC to the Motion for Stay re the Alascom Order	87

12/28/84	Opposition of the State of Alaska and the APUC to the AT&T request for Expedited Action	88
12/28/84	Opposition of Alascom to AT&T's Motion(for Stay re the Alascom Order	89
12/28/84	GCI Opposition to Motion for Stay (GCI)	90
12/28/84	GCI Opposition to Motion for Stay (Alascom)	91
12/28/84	ATU Opposition for Motion for Stay	92
12/31/84	Reply of GCI	93
12/31/84	Response of Alascom	94
1/16/85	<u>Order Denying Stay</u>	95
2/1/85	ATU Petition for Reconsideration	96
2/1/85	GCI Opposition to Petition for Expedited Reconsideration of the Alascom Order	97
2/1/85	Opposition of the State of Alaska (Alascom)	98
2/1/85	GCI Petition for Waiver of Page Limitation	99
2/1/85	Comments of MCI	100
2/7/85	AT&T Supplement to Motion for Stay (Alascom)	101
2/11/85	Alascom Letter to AT&T re escrow	102
2/13/85	GCI Opposition to AT&T Supplement	103
2/14/85	Reply Comments of AT&T	104
2/15/85	Comments of the State of Alaska	105
2/19/85	AT&T Letter to Alascom re escrow	106
2/25/85	Reply Comments of AT&T	107
3/20/85	Joint Motion of AT&T and GCI (Settlement Agreement)	108
3/22/85	Alascom Request to Require Filing of Complete Settlement Terms & for Adjustment of Comment Schedule	109

3/26/85	GCI Letter Enclosing Agreement	110
3/29/85	<u>Order Establishing Filing Period</u>	111
4/05/85	Comments of Alascom	112
4/05/85	Comments of NTIA	113
4/05/85	Comments of the State of Alaska and the APUC	114
4/05/85	Comments of United Utilities	115
4/12/85	Reply Comments of AT&T	116
4/12/85	Reply Comments of GCI	117
4/15/85	GCI Erratum	118
5/01/85	<u>Memorandum Opinion & Order (Approving Settlement Agreement)</u>	119
9/27/85	<u>Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (JB)</u>	120
1/13/86	<u>Order (JB)</u>	121
5/09/86	<u>Order Requesting Data & Inviting Comments</u>	122
7/02/86	Alascom Motion to Refer Issues to the JB	123
7/15/86	Alascom Response to Data Request(5 vols.)	124
7/15/86	AT&T Response to Data Request	125
7/15/86	State of Alaska Response to Data Request	126
7/15/86	GCI Response to Data Request	127
7/17/86	GCI Erratum	128
8/08/86	AT&T Erratum	129
8/14/86	State of Alaska Supplement to Response to Data Request	130
8/20/86	<u>Memorandum Opinion & Order</u>	131
9/05/86	Alascom Emergency Request for Immediate Rate Integration	132
9/18/86	ATA Letter re Alascom request	133

9/18/86	Comments of the State of Alaska on Alascom Emergency Request	134
9/18/86	Comments of AT&T	135
9/18/86	Opposition of GCI	136
9/19/86	GCI Exhibits to Opposition	137
9/23/86	Alascom Correction to Opposition to Petition for Expedited Reconsideration of the Alascom Order	138
9/30/86	Motion for Leave to File Reply Comments of AT&T and Reply Comments	139
10/01/86	Reply of Alascom	140
10/08/86	Correction to Reply of Alascom	141
10/09/86	Response of the State of Alaska to Reply Comments of AT&T	142
10/17/86	Reply Comments of ATA	143
11/5/86	Alascom Letter re additional facts for rate integration proceeding	144
11/28/86	Comments of the State of Alaska	145
12/02/86	Comments of NTIA	146
12/02/86	Comments of ATA	147
12/02/86	Comments of ATU	148
12/02/86	Comments of Alascom (JB)	149
12/02/86	Comments of AT&T (JB)	150
12/02/86	Comments of GCI (JB)	151
12/05/86	GCI's Supplemental Opposition to Alascom's Emergency Request for Immediate Rate Int.	152
12/12/86	Reply of Alascom to Supplemental Opposition	153
12/24/86	Motion to Obtain Required Information	154
1/02/87	<u>Memorandum Opinion & Order</u> (full RI)	155
1/06/87	AT&T Opposition to Alascom's Motion	156

1/09/87	<u>Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking</u>	157
2/06/87	Alascom Motion for Immediate Implementation of Court Order	158
2/17/87	AT&T Opposition to Motion for Immediate Implementation of Court Order	159
2/17/87	GCI Opposition to Motion for Immediate Implementation of Court Order	160
2/27/87	<u>Memorandum Opinion & Order</u>	161
2/27/87	Further Comments of the State of Alaska	162
2/27/87	Further Comments of AT&T	163
2/27/87	Further Comments of Alascom	164
2/27/87	Further Comments of ATA	165
3/02/87	GCI Motion for Leave to File Pleading Out of Time and Further Comments of GCI	166
3/02/87	Reply of Alascom to Response to Motion for Immediate Implementation of the Order	167
3/05/87	Comments of the State of Alaska in Connection with the Motion to Implement the Courts Order	168
3/10/87	Comments of the State of Alaska	169
3/27/87	Reply Comments of AT&T	170
3/27/87	Reply Comments of GCI	171
3/27/87	Reply Comments of Alascom	172
3/27/87	Reply Comments of ATU	173
3/27/87	Reply Comments of the State of Alaska	174
3/27/87	Reply Comments of ATA	175
3/31/87	Reply Comments of AT&T	176
3/31/87	Reply Comments of Alascom	177
3/31/87	Reply Comments of the State of Hawaii	178

5/18/87	<u>Memorandum Opinion & Order</u> (vacating Acceptance Order)	179
5/26/87	AT&T Emergency Motion for Grant of Special Permission	180
6/26/87	Further Submission of Alascom	181
7/07/87	GCI Update to Joint Board	182
9/03/87	AT&T Ex Parte Report	183
9/16/87	Alascom Report of Ex Parte Presentation on 9/15/87	184
11/02/87	Alascom Motion to Continue Hawaii to Alaska Arrangement	185
11/05/87	AT&T Petition for a Lawful Interim Division of Charges	186
11/13/87	Alascom Supplement to 9/15/87 Ex Parte Report	187
11/16/87	Opposition of the State of Alaska	188
11/23/87	FCC Public Notice	189
11/30/87	Alascom Motion for Leave to File Evidentiary Submission Concerning Alaska Intrastate Toll Rates	190
12/01/87	Opposition Of AT&T re Hawaii to Alaska	191
12/01/87	Comments of the State of Hawaii	192
12/08/87	Reply Comments of AT&T	193
12/08/87	Reply of Alascom re Hawaii to Alaska	194
12/10/87	Opposition of AT&T	195
12/11/87	AT&T Ex Parte Report	196
12/18/87	Opposition of Alascom	197
12/18/87	Comments of the State of Hawaii	198
12/22/87	Reply of Alascom to Opposition of AT&T	199
1/11/88	State of Alaska Reply Comments re AT&T's Petition For a Lawful Interim Division of Charges	200

1/11/88	Reply Comments of AT&T	201
1/27/88	Alascom Submission re Cost of Service and Rate Design in U-87-25	202
1/28/88	Supplemental Comments of Alascom	203
2/09/88	AT&T Opposition to Supplemental Comments of Alascom	204
2/22/88	AT&T's Comments on Alascom's Submission re Intrastate Tariff Proposal	205
3/07/88	Response of Alascom	206
3/31/88	Comments of the State of Alaska	207
5/24/88	Withdrawal of Alascom's Opposition to the Carrier Lease Agreement	208
6/21/88	Alascom Request for Ex Parte Meeting	209
7/21/88	<u>Order</u> (Wm. Long to JB)	210
7/25/88	Alascom Report of Ex Parte Presentation on 7/24/88	211
12/28/88	FCC NEWS - Federal State Joint Board Issues Supplemental Notice Concerning Provision of Telecommunication Service to Alaska	212
1/3/89	FCC Supplemental Order Inviting Comments	213
1/10/89	Alascom Ex Parte Report	214
2/27/89	GCI Data Submission	215
2/27/89	AT&T Response to Data Request	216
2/27/89	State of Alaska Response to Request	217
2/27/89	Alascom Response to Data Request	218
2/27/89	GCI Ex Parte re Nels Smith	219
2/27/89	State of Alaska Ex Parte with CCB Staff	220
2/28/89	GCI Ex Parte re Long and Choura	221
3/1/89	GCI Ex Parte re Bruce Hagen	222
3/2/89	GCI Ex Parte re CCB Staff (Slotten)	223

3/3/89	State of Alaska Ex Parte re Smith, Long and Hagen	224
4/13/89	Comments of Alascom	225
4/13/89	Comments of AT&T	226
4/13/89	Comments of GCI	227
4/13/89	Comments of ATA	228
4/13/89	Comments of the State of Alaska	229
4/13/89	Comments of the State of Hawaii	230
4/13/89	Comments of United Utilities	231
4/13/89	Comments of USTA	232
4/13/89	Comments of OPASTCO	233
5/15/89	Reply Comments of GCI	234
5/15/89	Reply Comments of Alascom	235
5/15/89	Reply Comments of AT&T	236
5/15/89	Reply Comments of the State of Alaska	237
5/15/89	Reply Comments of the State of Hawaii	238
5/15/89	Reply Comments of NECA	239
5/15/89	Reply Comments of ATA	240
5/22/89	NECA Errata	241
5/24/89	AT&T Ex Parte	242
7/25/89	GCI Ex Parte	243
7/26/89	State of Alaska Ex Parte Report	244
7/27/89	Alascom Ex Parte Presentation at NARUC	245
9/15/89	Alascom Ex Parte Presentation to Barrett	246
11/2/89	FCC News - FCC Chairman Alfred Sikes Appointed Chairman of the Federal State Joint Boards	247
11/9/89	FCC News - FCC Commissioner Andrew C. Barrett to serve on Federal-State Joint Boards	248

11/9/89	Alascom Section 214 Application re PTC Cable	249
11/17/89	Order (Barrett)	250
11/21/89	Order (Sikes)	251
1/5/90	Comments of AT&T (ALASCOM 214 APP.)	252
1/10/90	Supplemental Filing of GCI	253
1/10/90	GCI Ex Parte (Barrett)	254
1/11/90	GCI Ex Parte (Quello)	255
1/11/90	GCI Ex Parte (Sikes & Firestone)	256
1/11/90	GCI Ex Parte (Pettit)	257
1/12/90	GCI Ex Parte (Slotten)	258
1/16/90	GCI Ex Parte (Choura & Long)	259
1/22/90	Opposition of Alascom	260
1/24/90	Alascom Request for Extension of Time	261
2/1/90	Reply of AT&T	262
2/1/90	Reply of GCI	263
2/12/90	Alascom Ex Parte Filing	264
2/26/90	United Petition for Leave to File	265
2/26/90	Response of United Utilities	266
2/26/90	Response of Alascom	267
2/28/90	GCI ex Parte (Long)	268
2/28/90	GCI ex Parte (Smith)	269
3/1/90	GCI Ex Parte (Hagen)	270
3/5/90	State of Alaska Ex Parte	271
3/7/90	GCI Request for Extension of Time	272
3/12/90	Supplemental Comments of AT&T (Bush Filing)	273
3/22/90	Reply Of GCI	274

5/17/91	Order (Joe Miller)	300
6/18/91	GCI ex parte (Robinson)	301
6/18/91	GCI ex parte (Petit)	302
6/18/91	GCI ex parte (Duggan)	303
6/18/91	GCI ex parte (Slotten)	304
7/22/91	GCI ex parte (Miller)	305
7/23/91	GCI ex parte (Hagen)	306
7/24/91	GCI ex parte (Choura)	307
7/31/91	Alascom ex parte (Miller, Hagen, Knowles)	308
8/2/91	Alascom ex parte (Miller, Hagen, Knowles)	309
9/19/91	GCI Ex Parte (Robinson, Pettit)	310
10/4/91	State Commission Joint Board Request	311
10/9/91	GCI ex parte (Petit)	312
10/10/91	GCI ex parte (Slotten)	313
11/12/91	GCI ex parte (Choura, Rolka)	314
11/13/91	GCI ex parte (Miller)	315
11/14/91	GCI ex parte (Hagen)	316
11/19/92	AT&T ex parte (Sikes, Firestone, Robinson, Tritt)	317
1/17/92	AT&T ex parte (Duggan, Oliver)	318
1/17/92	AT&T ex parte (Sikes, Robinson, Firestone, Tritt)	319
1/21/92	AT&T ex parte (Kuchera)	320
1/22/92	Alascom ex parte (Sikes, Firestone, Pettit)	321
1/27/92	GCI ex parte (Abernathy)	322

1/27/92	Alascom ex parte (Knowles, Plaga, Treuer)	323
1/27/92	Alascom ex parte (Hagen, Payne)	324
1/28/92	Alascom ex parte (Choura)	325
1/28/92	Alascom ex parte (Rolka, Cready)	326
1/29/92	Petition of GCI	327
1/29/92	Joint Petition of Alascom and AT&T	328
1/30/92	Alascom ex parte (Miller, Benner)	329
2/6/92	GCI ex parte (Kuchera)	330
2/6/92	GCI ex Parte (Tritt)	331
2/7/92	GCI Motion to Establish a Consolidated Procedural Schedule	332
2/7/92	Comments of Alascom and Proposed Schedule	333
2/7/92	Alascom Response to State Joint Board Questions	333A
2/12/92	GCI ex parte (Schlichting, Donovan, Crellin, Nilsson)	334
2/18/92	GCI ex parte (Kuchera)	335
2/18/92	Reply to Comments on GCI Petition	336
2/19/92	GCI ex parte (Oliver)	337
2/20/92	GCI ex parte (Pettit, Abernathy)	338
2/20/92	AT&T answer to the Joint Board	339
2/28/92	GCI ex parte (Knowles)	340
3/2/92	GCI ex parte (Rolka)	341
3/2/92	GCI ex parte (Miller, Benner)	342
3/4/92	GCI ex parte (Hagen)	343

3/4/92	FCC Public Notice - Joint Petition and Associated Filings by AT&T, Alascom, and TUA re Alaska Telecommunications Services and Petition to Establish Regulatory Policies Concerning the Alaska Telecommunications Market Structure Filed by GCI	344
3/16/92	ATU Ex Parte	345
3/16/92	State of Hawaii Ex Parte (Donovon, Nilsson)	346
3/17/92	State of Hawaii Ex Parte (Donovon)	347
3/17/92	PTI, Alascom, TUA Response to Questions of JB	348
3/19/92	GCI Ex Parte (Harris)	349
3/19/92	GCI Ex Parte (Audits and Accounting)	350
3/19/92	ATA Entry of Appearance	351
3/19/92	ATA Motion for Extension of Time	352
3/23/92	AT&T Opposition to ATA's Motion for Extension of Time	353
3/24/92	Opposition of Alascom to Motion for Extension of Time	354
3/26/92	ATA Reply To AT&T and Alascom Oppositions to the ATA Motion for Extension of Time	355
3/26/92	FCC NEWS - David Rolka Named to Joint Board	356
3/26/92	ATU Cover Letter re APUC Order	357
3/30/92	GCI Ex Parte (Oliver)	358
4/2/92	Order (C - 4/20, RC - 5/20)	359
4/6/92	GCI Ex Parte (Kenyon)	360
4/20/92	Petition to Deny, Opposition and Comments of GCI	361
4/20/92	Comments of the State of Alaska	362
4/20/92	Comments of Alascom	363
4/20/92	Interim Opposition of the ATA	364

4/20/92	Comments of United Utilities	365
4/20/92	Comments of Sprint	366
4/20/92	ATU Interim Opposition	367
4/20/92	Comments of MCI	368
4/20/92	Comments of the State of Hawaii	369
4/20/92	Comments of AT&T	370
4/20/92	Comments of NECA	371
4/21/92	State Joint Board Data Request No. 2	372
4/23/92	GCI Erratum	373
4/27/92	NARUC Notice of Change of Counsel	374
5/1/92	State Ex Parte - Barrett and Kuchera	375
5/1/92	State Ex Parte - Oliver	376
5/1/92	State Ex parte - Sikes, Pettit, Robinson	377
5/1/92	State Ex parte - Cornell and Timmer	378
5/1/92	State Ex parte - CCB	379
5/4/92	Order (Rolka)	380
5/8/92	Alascom Response to Data Request No. 2	381
5/11/92	GCI ex parte - Abernathy	382
5/12/92	GCI ex parte - Barrett and Kuchera	383
5/13/92	GCI ex parte - Duggan and Oliver	384
5/14/92	GCI ex parte - Pettit and Seidman	385
5/14/92	GCI ex parte - Tritt and CCB	386
5/14/92	GCI ex parte - Robinson and Donovan	387
5/19/92	Joint Board Third Data Request	388

5/20/92	Reply Comments of GCI	389
5/20/92	Reply Comments of MCI	390
5/20/92	Reply Comments of Alascom	391
5/20/92	Reply Comments of AT&T	392
5/20/92	Reply Comments of the State of Alaska	393
5/20/92	Reply Comments of OPASTCO	394
5/20/92	Reply Comments of ATA	395
5/20/92	Reply Comments of the State of hawaii	396
5/26/92	State of Alaska Ex Parte (Knowles)	397
5/28/92	ATU Ex Parte (Levitz)	398
5/28/92	United Utilities Motion for Deferral Pending Submission of Additional Data or, In the Alternative, for Dismissal	399
6/1/92	AT&T Response to Third Data Request	400
6/3/92	Alascom Response to Third Data Request	401
6/3/92	AT&T's Opposition to United Utilities Motion for Deferral	402
6/3/92	GCI Ex parte (Sikes et al)	403
6/3/92	United Utilities Ex parte (Barrett, Kuchera, Tritt, Donovan, Nilsson, Crellin, Harris)	404
6/4/92	United Utilities Ex Parte (Sikes, Robinson, Duggan, Oliver, Abernathy, Timmer, Schlichting)	405
6/4/92	State of Alaska Ex parte (Hagen)	406
6/5/92	GCI Ex parte (A&A)	407
6/5/92	Opposition of Alascom to United Utilities Motion For Deferral	408
6/11/92	AT&T Ex parte (Donovan, Hall, Nilsson)	409

6/12/92	Joint Board 4th Data Request	410
6/15/92	GCI Ex Parte (A&A)	411
6/15/92	United Utilities Ex parte (Donovan)	412
6/16/92	ATA Ex Parte (Quello, Harris, Fontes, Barrett, Kuchera, Rath, Abernathy, Oliver, Levitz)	413
6/16/92	GCI Ex Parte (Kenyon)	414
6/17/92	Alascom Ex parte (Moran, Hall, Boyle)	415
6/18/92	State of Alaska Ex Parte (Miller)	416
6/18/02	State of Alaska Ex parte (Robinson)	417
6/22/92	Alascom Response to Request No 4	418
6/23/92	Alascom Ex Parte (Knowles, Kenyon)	419
6/24/92	Alascom Ex parte (Miller, Benner)	420
6/25/92	Joint Board 5th Data Request to AT&T	421
6/26/92	Alascom Erratum to Data Request No. 4	422
6/26/92	Alascom Ex parte (Hagen)	423
7/6/92	United Utilities Ex parte (Hall)	424
7/7/92	AT&T Ex parte (Knowles, Kenyon)	425
7/10/92	Alascom Ex Parte (Tritt, et al)	426
7/10/92	Alascom ex parte (Nilsson, Donovan, Crellin)	427
7/10/92	Alascom Ex parte (Duggan, Oliver)	428
7/10/92	GCI Ex parte (Pettit, Sledman)	429
7/10/92	AT&T Ex parte (Hagen)	430
7/13/92	Alascom Ex parte (A&A)	431
7/14/92	GCI Ex Parte (Choura)	432

7/15/92	AT&T Ex Parte (Boyle)	433
7/17/92	APUC Ex Parte re Study Area	434
7/21/92	GCI ex Parte (Knowles, Kenyon)	435
7/21/92	Alascom Ex parte (Knowles, Kenyon)	436
7/22/92	Alascom Letter re Confidentiality	437
7/23/92	Alascom Ex parte (Donovan, Crellin)	438
7/23/92	GCI Ex parte (Tritt, et al)	439
7/24/92	AT&T Ex Parte (Rolka, Kriete)	440
7/28/92	Alascom letter re Confidentiality	441
7/28/92	State of Alaska ex parte (Kenyon)	442
7/28/92	State of Alaska ex parte (Kriete)	443
7/28/92	State of Alaska ex parte (Choura)	444
7/28/92	State of Alaska ex parte (Tritt, Spurlock)	445
7/28/92	State of Alaska ex parte (Hagen)	446
7/28/92	State of Alaska ex parte (Knowles)	447
7/28/92	State of Alaska ex parte (Miller, Brenner)	448
7/28/92	Alascom ex parte (Rolka, Kriete)	449
7/28/92	GCI ex parte (Hagen, Miller, Brenner, Kriete, Choura)	450
7/28/92	GCI ex parte (Rolka, Kriete)	451
7/29/92	ATA ex parte (Knowles, Kenyon)	452
7/31/92	Alascom ex parte (Miller, Benner)	453
7/31/92	Alascom ex parte (Knowles)	454
8/4/92	Overland Consulting Report	455
8/5/92	Joint Board memo	456

8/5/92	Alascom Letter re GCI ex parte	457
8/6/92	GCI Response to Alascom Letter	458
8/7/92	Alascom Initial Response to Joint Board memo	459
8/10/92	GCI ex parte (Spurlock, Donovan)	460
8/11/92	GCI ex parte (Kuchera)	461
8/12/92	GCI ex Parte (Robinson)	462
8/13/92	GCI ex parte (Oliver)	463
8/14/92	GCI ex parte (Pettit, Seidman)	464
8/17/92	PTI Letter Attaching Exhibits for 8/7 Response	465
8/18/92	ATA Ex Parte (Kenyon)	466
8/28/92	State of Alaska Ex parte (Kenyon, Choura)	467
8/31/92	State of Alaska Ex parte (Miller)	468
8/31/92	AT&T Response to Joint Board	469
9/1/92	PTI Request for Extension of Time	470
9/1/92	ATA Response to Joint Board	471
9/1/92	GCI Response to Joint Board	472
9/3/92	PTI Declaration of Phillip J. Freedenberg	473
9/4/92	State Joint Board Letter re Extension of Time	474
9/10/92	Alascom Ex Parte In Response to GCI Filing (Rath)	475
9/10/92	Alascom Ex Parte Response to GCI Filing (Oliver)	476
9/10/92	Alascom Ex parte In Response to GCI Filing (Kuchera)	477
9/10/92	Alascom ex Parte In Response to GCI Filing (Levitz, Spurlock, Hall, Donovan, Crellin)	478
9/11/92	PTI Request for Extension of Time (9/21)	479

9/14/92	Alascom ex Parte transmitting extension of time request	480
9/15/92	GCI Ex Parte (Knowles, Kenyon)	481
9/15/92	State of Alaska Ex Parte in response to Alascom Letter re extension of time	482
9/15/92	ATA Motion to Take official Notice of the APUC's Order No. 14 in Docket U-92-9	483
9/17/92	GCI Ex parte (Kuchera)	484
9/18/92	GCI Ex Parte (Knowles)	485
9/18/92	GCI Ex parte (Levitz, Spurlock, Donovan, Hall)	486
9/18/92	GCI Ex Parte (Seidman)	487
9/18/92	GCI Ex parte (Oliver)	488
9/18/92	Alascom ex parte (Withdrawal to Miller, Knowles, Kriete)	489
9/21/92	GCI Ex Parte (Rath)	490
9/21/92	State of Alaska ex parte (Spurlock)	491
9/21/92	State of Alaska ex parte (Brenner)	492
9/21/92	State of Alaska ex parte (Knowles)	493
9/21/92	Alascom response to Joint Board Memo	494
9/22/92	Alascom Letter Transmitting its response to the Joint Board to the FCC	495
9/23/92	State of Alaska ex parte (Knowles)	496
9/23/92	GCI Ex parte (Choura)	497
9/25/92	GCI ex Parte (Miller, Benner)	498
9/25/92	APUC Letter transmitting Ben Johnson's testimony to FCC for record	499

10/1/92	State of Alaska ex parte (Knowles, Kenyon, Miller Benner)	500
10/2/92	Proposal of GCI	501
10/5/92	GCI Ex Parte (Moran, Rand, Boyle, Hall)	502
10/6/92	GCI Ex Parte (Knowles)	503
10/6/92	GCI Letter In Response to Alascom Price Cap Proposal	504
10/9/92	Alascom Response to GCI letter re Price Caps	505
10/9/92	AT&T Letter re Abandonment Shift	506
10/13/92	GCI Ex Parte (Hagen)	507
10/13/92	Alascom Letter transmitting Oct 9th response	508
10/14/92	AT&T Ex parte (Oliver)	509
10/14/92	AT&T Ex Parte (Kuchera)	510
10/14/92	ATA Ex Parte (State Commissioners)	511
10/15/92	Financial Analysis of the GCI Proposals	512
10/15/92	GCI Ex parte (Kenyon)	513
10/16/92	GCI Ex Parte (Letter to State Commissioners)	514
10/22/92	GCI Reply to Alascom response re price cap plan	515
10/23/92	GCI Ex Parte (Kuchera)	516
10/23/92	GCI Ex Parte (Oliver)	517
10/23/92	Alascom Opposition to Proposal of GCI	518
10/30/92	AT&T Ex Parte (Extending Time to 1/15/93)	519
11/3/92	State of Alaska Ex parte (Knowles, Kenyon, Miller, Kriete)	520
11/5/92	State Commissioners Memorandum of Principles Alaska Market Structure: The State members' Plan	521

11/5/92	GCI Reply to Opposition of Alascom	522
11/6/92	ATA Letter re bush earth stations	523
11/6/92	PTI ex parte (Knowles)	524
11/10/92	GCI Ex Parte (Oliver)	525
11/10/92	GCI Ex Parte (Kuchera)	526
11/10/92	Alascom letter to State Comm. re ex parte rules and the Sunshine Act	527
11/12/92	Alascom ex parte re request for documents from the Joint Board	528
11/13/92	Comments of the State of Alaska on Various Proposals to modify the master Agreement	529
11/17/92	GCI Ex parte (State Joint Board)	530
11/17/92	Alascom ex parte (Knowles)	531
11/17/92	Alascom ex parte (State Joint Board)	532
11/18/92	AT&T Full ex parte (State Joint Board)	533
11/18/92	Alascom ex parte (Miller, Benner)	534
11/20/92	GCI Full ex Parte (State Joint Board)	535
11/20/92	Alascom Full ex parte (State Joint Board)	536
11/23/92	State of Alaska Full Ex parte (State Joint Board)	537
12/1/92	GCI Ex Parte (Oliver)	538
12/2/92	GCI Ex parte (Tritt, Schlichting)	539
12/2/92	FCC Public Notice - Pleading Cycle for Comments on the State members' Plan for the Interstate Alaska Market Structure	540
12/3/92	GCI Ex Parte (Knowles, Kenyon)	541
12/11/92	ATA Ex parte (Knowles)	542

12/17/92	Alascom Ex Parte (Knowles, Kenyon)	543
12/18/92	Comments of GCI	544
12/18/92	Comments of the State of Alaska	545
12/18/92	Comments of United Utilities	546
12/18/92	Comments of MCI	547
12/18/92	Comments of the ATA	548
12/18/92	Comments of Alascom	549
12/18/92	APUC Letter re Proceeding	550
12/18/92	Comments of AT&T	551
1/8/93	GCI Ex Parte (Choura)	552
1/8/93	GCI Ex parte (Miller)	553
1/8/93	GCI Ex parte (Knowles, Kenyon)	554
1/8/93	Alascom ex parte (Kuchera)	555
1/11/93	GCI Ex Parte (Hagen)	556
1/12/93	GCI Ex Parte (Kriete)	557
1/12/93	GCI Ex Parte (Trill, Levitz, Schlichting)	558
1/15/93	Reply Comments of GCI	559
1/15/93	Reply Comments of Alascom	560
1/15/93	Reply Comments of the State of Alaska	561
1/15/93	Reply Comments of ATA	562
1/15/93	Reply Comments of AT&T	563
1/26/93	GCI Ex Parte (Trill)	564
1/28/93	GCI Ex Parte (Oliver)	565
1/28/93	GCI Ex Parte (Kuchera)	566

2/1/93	GCI Ex Parte (Rolka, Krite)	567
2/4/93	GCI Ex Parte (Knowles, Kenyon)	568
2/4/93	AT&T Ex Parte (Rolka, Krite)	569
2/8/93	GCI Ex Parte (Belvin)	570
2/10/93	GCI Ex Parte (Choura)	571
2/11/93	GCI Ex Parte (Miller, Benner)	572
2/16/93	GCI Ex Parte (Knowles, Kenyon)	573
2/16/93	Alascom Letter re expiration of MA and further discussions	574
2/17/93	GCI Ex Parte (CCB - Tritt, Levitz, Moran, Donovan)	575
2/22/93	GCI Ex Parte (Kuchera)	576
2/22/93	GCI Ex Parte (Abernathy - Quello)	577
2/22/93	GCI Ex Parte (Duggan, Oliver)	578
2/23/93	GCI Ex Parte (Moran, Rand, Crellin, Hall)	579
2/23/93	GCI Ex Parte (Choura)	580
2/26/93	State of Alaska Ex parte (Miller)	581
3/1/93	Alascom Ex Parte (Knowles)	582
3/1/93	State of Alaska Ex Parte (Abernathy, Oliver)	583
3/4/93	FCC NEWS - FCC Chairman James H. Quello to Serve as the Chairman of the Alaska Federal State Joint Board	584
3/4/93	Order (Quello)	585
3/5/93	State of Alaska Ex Parte (Knowles)	586
3/9/93	Alascom Ex Parte (Oliver, Abernathy, Kuchera)	587
3/9/93	Alascom Ex Parte (Schlichting, Moran, Crellin, Hall, Nilsson, Levitz)	588

3/16/93	ATU Ex parte (Crellin, Reitzel)	589
3/24/93	AT&T Ex Parte (CCB)	590
3/31/91	AT&T's Petition to Terminate the JSA	591
4/13/93	Alascom Ex parte (Knowles)	592
4/15/93	Initial Response of Alascom to AT&T's Petition to Terminate the JSA	593
4/16/93	Alascom Ex Parte (CCB)	594
5/6/93	Alascom Ex Parte (Knowles)	595
5/17/93	Tentative Recommendation and Order Invitring Comments	596
5/25/93	Alascom Ex Parte (Knowles)	597
6/7/93	Alascom Response to Request for Implementation Plan	598
6/7/93	AT&T Response to Request for an Implementation Plan	599
6/11/93	Alascom Ex parte (Knowles)	600
6/15/93	Alascom Ex parte (Miller)	601
6/15/93	Alascom Request for Supplementation of Record	602
6/23/93	FCC PUBLIC NOTICE - Alaska Federal State Joint Board to Convene Hearing in Anchorage, Alaska on Thursday July 1, 1993	603
6/28/93	✓Comments of GCI on the Tentative Recommendation	604
6/28/93	✓Comments of ATU	605
6/28/93	✓Comments of AT&T	606
6/28/93	✓Comments of ATA	607
6/28/93	· Motion of Alascom to Schedule Reply Comments	608
6/28/93	✓Comments of MCI	609
6/28/93	✓Comments of Sprint	610

6/28/93	Comments of the State of Alaska	611
6/28/93	Comments of the State of Hawaii	612
6/28/93	Comments of United Utilities	613
6/28/93	Comments of Southwestern Bell	614
6/28/93	Comments of NECA	615
6/28/93	Pitsch Communications Ex Parte	616
6/29/93	GCI Opposition to Alascom's Motion to Schedule Reply Comments	617
6/30/93	Reply of Alascom to Opposition to Motion to Schedule Reply Comments	618
7/8/93	AT&T Ex Parte (Halprin ??)	619
7/9/93	Order (Additional Comment Dat of 7/22)	620
7/9/93	Letters From Lori Kenyon to Alascom	621
7/12/93	GCI Reply Comments	622
7/12/93	MCI Reply Comments	623
7/12/93	Sprint Reply Comments	624
7/12/93	Reply Comments of the State of Hawaii	625
7/12/93	Reply Comments of the State of Alaska	626
7/12/94	ATA's Comments	627
7/12/93	Comments of Alascom	628
7/12/93	Reply Comment of AT&T	629
7/12/93	Reply Comments of United Utilities	630
7/12/93	Reply Comments of USTA	631
7/12/93	Letter of Ketelyn Ohmer	632
7/12/93	Letter of Ashley Reed	633

7/12/93	Letter of Paul Reid (Sagaya Corp.)	634
7/12/93	Letter of Donald Long, Mayor of Barrow	635
7/12/93	Letter of Chuch Huntley, Huntley and Assoc.	636
7/12/93	Letter of Kevin Bruce, Northwest Strategies	637
7/12/93	Letter of Gov. Bill Sheffield	638
7/93	Letter of Abacus Computer Service	639
7/93	Letter of Carr Gottstein	640
7/93	Letter of Carr Gottstein (taking Back AT&T Endorsement)	641
7/93	Letter of C Graphics	642
7/93	Letter of Alissa Crandall	643
7/93	Letter of Cock Inlet Region Inc.	644
7/93	Letter of Details	645
7/93	Letter of Dennis DeWinter	646
7/93	Letter of Cathy Hart	647
7/93	Letter of Sen. George Jacko	648
7/93	Letter of Lynn Kenney	649
7/93	Letter of Kings Inn	650
7/93	Letter of Sen. Suzanne Little	651
7/93	Letter of Rep. Eileen MacLean	652
7/93	Letter of Microwave	653
7/93	Letter of Moonbeam Productions	654
7/93	Letter of Zoe Oakley	655
7/93	Letter of Production Plus	656
7/93	Letter of Brett Rawalt	657

7/93	Letter of Real Estate This Week	658
7/93	Letter of Tim Rittal	659
7/93	Letter of Seidl's Native Crafts	660
7/93	Letter of Sew Easy	661
7/93	Letter of Cindy Steward	662
7/93	Letter of Take Action Co.	663
7/93	Letter of Lisa Wolf	664
7/93	Letter of Donald Whit	665
7/93	Letter of Wayne Christanson, William Biller, John and Judy Travlos, Joyce Powers, and Shannon Napier with response from Kriete	666
7/93	Letter of Donna Weeks with response from Kriete	667
7/93	Letter of Donald White with response from Kriete	668
7/93	Letter of Larry McCormick with response from Kriete	669
7/12/93	Letter of National Bank Of Alaska	670
7/13/93	GCI Ex Parte (CCB)	671
7/14/93	GCI Ex Parte (Abernathy)	672
7/14/93	GCI Ex Parte (Oliver)	673
7/14/93	GCI Ex Parte (Hoagg)	674
7/14/93	Letter from Alascom to Lori Kenyon	675
7/15/93	Alascom Ex Parte (Letter to Kenyon)	676
7/16/93	Alascom Ex Parte (Knowles)	677
7/16/93	Motion of Alascom, Inc. (re Peter Pitsch)	678
7/20/93	GCI Ex Parte (Rolka, Kriete)	679
7/20/93	Pitsch Ex Parte	680

7/21/93	GCI Ex Parte (Knowles)	681
7/22/93	AT&T's Reply to Motion of Alascom	682
7/22/93	AT&T Letter re Supplemental Reply Comments	683
7/22/93	Reply Comments of GCI in Response to Public Hearing	684
7/22/93	Reply Comments of Alascom	685
7/26/93	GCI Ex Parte (Miller, Benner)	686
7/26/93	GCI Ex Parte (Choura)	687
7/26/93	GCI Ex Parte (Hagen)	688

1 I have prepared. My name is Jeff Silverman.

2 COMMISSIONER BARRETT: Well, no, no, no, no,
3 no, no, no, hold on one minute. Why don't you summarize
4 that the best you can unless you going to stay under the
5 time limit. I don't need two people from the same
6 organization making remarks.

7 MR. SILVERMAN: That's fine. I'll stay well
8 within the time limit.

9 COMMISSIONER BARRETT: Fine, thank you.

10 MR. SILVERMAN: My name is Jeff Silverman.
11 I am the Public Information Director for the Alaska
12 Federation of Natives which represents the concerns of
13 Alaska's 85,00 Eskimos, Indians and Aleuts. Our reason
14 for attending this hearing and providing these comments
15 is simple. The statewide native communities would like
16 to see that affordable communication for rural Alaskans
17 will continue. We are concerned that rural Alaskans,
18 native and non native, businesses, schools, hospitals and
19 private citizens will be left out of the development
20 investment and realignment that is to come.

21 We live in a time of transition. Changes
22 keep coming and nowhere in Alaska are they more dramatic
23 than in Alaska's villages. The telecommunications
24 revolution is the latest and probably the most profound
25 change to come. We should not forget that as late as the

1 mid 1970s many bush areas had no telephone service at
2 all. Alaska's telecommunication boon connected our far-
3 flung communities and in many ways has helped to bridge
4 the gulf between urban and rural Alaska.

5 Telecommunications has made it possible for
6 even the most remote village to tune into the rest of the
7 world. Distance education has helped to link students
8 with teachers and professors hundreds of miles away. In
9 a high cost state like Alaska, this connection will be
10 important as we begin to deal with the issue of future
11 diminishing state revenues.

12 The key to the maintenance of the
13 telecommunications system that has developed in Alaska is
14 affordability. People in rural Alaska are extremely
15 vulnerable to changes in the government programs and
16 appropriations policies. They live on the razor's edge,
17 so to speak.

18 Let me illustrate. According to the AFN
19 status reports on Alaska natives, A Call For Action,
20 which is a study commissioned by AFN in 1989 and updated
21 in 1992, federal expenditures in rural Alaska are heavily
22 skewed towards funds for essential community services and
23 facilities and away from payments to individuals. In
24 Western Alaska, the grants and contracts for governmental
25 programs reached \$3,922 per capita, while direct payments

1 to individuals, mainly social security and other
2 retirement benefits were substantially lower at \$874 per
3 capita. Thus, changes in government policy and funding
4 are felt quickly and on a communitywide basis, not
5 absorbed only by a small sector of the population, as
6 often happens in the cities.

7 The high cost of living in rural Alaska is
8 well documented. In A Call To Action, it was shown that
9 the overall cost of living in villages in 1990 was
10 between 126 and 145 percent higher than in Anchorage,
11 while the cost of certain essentials like fuel were an
12 incredible 476 percent higher than in Anchorage. When
13 effective income is reduced, cash is scarce, it becomes
14 increasingly difficult for communities to support
15 expensive utilities like power and water and
16 communications.

17 These communications -- these utilities are
18 essential. In the rural areas, the stakes are higher
19 because there is a greater dependence on a smaller set of
20 alternatives. We are greatly worried that if villages
21 can't afford this kind of service, that one by one they
22 will be shut off. The health, social and economic
23 ramifications would be extreme, to say the least. It
24 would represent a big step backward after two decades of
25 great strides made in telecommunications in rural Alaska.

1 We know that change is inevitable and it is
2 coming to Alaska's telecommunication system. We also
3 know that modern technology is expensive, especially in
4 rural Alaska. If only those with the ability to pay have
5 the service in the future, it would only be a handful of
6 customers. Affordability is the key issue now and as we
7 move forward into this decade. Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER KNOWLES: Thank you very much,
9 Mr. Silverman.

10 COMMISSIONER BARRETT: Thank you very much.
11 Thank you, Mr. Silverman. Commissioner Knowles, we're
12 going to have Miss Julie Kitka, also from the Alaska
13 Federation here also make some comments so we can take
14 those two organizations together. Ms. Kitka.

15 MS. KITKA: Mr. Chairman, good afternoon.
16 My name is Julie Kitka, and I'm the President of Alaska
17 Native Corporation. The reason why Mr. Silverman was
18 planning on testifying is we weren't aware that it would
19 be possible for me to attend and -- (inaudible).

20 COMMISSIONER KNOWLES: Excuse me. Could
21 you -- could you please speak up a bit or --

22 COMMISSIONER BARRETT: Move your chair over.
23 Move your chair over, if you want to.

24 COMMISSIONER KNOWLES: We're out of camera
25 range, however. There we go.

1 COMMISSIONER BARRETT: We'll get it
2 straight.

3 COMMISSIONER KNOWLES: I'm glad technical
4 problems can be shared.

5 COMMISSIONER BARRETT: We're fine.

6 COMMISSIONER KNOWLES: Thank you.

7 MS. KITKA: Like I said, I'm the President
8 of the Alaska Federation of Natives. AFN is a political
9 umbrella organization for the native people in the State
10 of Alaska. We came to existence in 1966, primarily to
11 focus on obtaining a land claims settlement for our
12 people. As to the involvement in the communications
13 issues surrounding rural communications and helping our
14 villages come into the modern world, has been extensive
15 since 1966. We are very concerned with what's going on
16 here for a couple reasons and -- written testimony which
17 Mr. Silverman submitted for the record has been --
18 (inaudible) -- but to highlight some of those.

19 The first one is the notice for the hearing
20 was very, very inadequate. Our communities are very
21 far-flung. This is not a time of year which is conducive
22 for a hearing. Many of our people are out at the fish
23 camps, getting ready for commercial fishing. Our
24 organization as an organization does not even schedule
25 any meetings, regular board or anything through this

1 period of time because it is such a bad time for our
2 people, our native people to get together to talk about
3 these issues. So I'd really like to urge you that if you
4 do have the ability to extend the time to try to
5 accommodate the people in the rural areas -- (inaudible).
6 Summertime is just not the time to -- (inaudible). You
7 can talk to any federal agency that deals in rural Alaska
8 and they will tell you the same thing that summertime the
9 people are taking care of their families and their own
10 livelihood, as far as the fish camps and stuff. It's
11 just not a time for public policy discussions -- where
12 people's input is desired on that --

9
13 The second thing is the information that we
14 have been privy to, as far as what's been submitted as
15 far as the plan doesn't have enough detail for us to
16 determine whether or not the plans are going to actually
17 be beneficial to rural Alaska. For example, the issue of
18 satellite and who is going to put up the satellite,
19 which -- the current satellite when its usefulness
20 expires. Those type of details on that concern us
21 because it's very hard to evaluate plans if you don't
22 have the details to know how it's going to affect the
23 rural areas, but I can tell you that communications is
24 very vital to our people out in the villages.

25 One example which is unique in the State of

1 Alaska is our health care system. We have community
2 health aides in all our villages. They provide
3 approximately 80 percent of our direct medical care to
4 our people in the villages because there's not doctors
5 and nurses or physician assistants in the villages.
6 These community health aides, they are in daily contact
7 via phone to doctors who treat our people either for
8 gunshot, gunshot accidents -- health issues or whatever.
9 That has become a vital link in our health care system is
10 to access through telephone on that.

11 In the past, it was radio. In the past we
12 had to make do with what limited communications we had.
13 So communications is really integrated into the rural
14 areas and we are hopeful that communications can be of
15 benefit to our people, both in the health care system to
16 provide better and faster access to doctors and diagnosis
17 of conditions, because of the size of our communities are
18 too small to ever have the critical mass where you'd have
19 these professions in the medical field to be ever able to
20 live there. They're just too small, not a large enough
21 group, critical mass.

22 Another example where communications has to
23 play a vital role, as far as our people are concerned, is
24 in the education area. Right now, study after study
25 shows our people, especially in the villages are getting

1 a substandard education by every measure of academic
2 achievement that is listed, and we think that
3 communications can improve that.

4 Once again, the size of our communities
5 being very small, thus not having critical mass to have
6 instructors, science teachers that teach science, math
7 teachers that teach math are things where communications
8 fill the gap in there and there has been demonstrations
9 in the State which have been very successful. We want to
10 see, as technology develops and communication does, we
11 don't want to be shut out for reasons of not being able
12 to afford it and the issue of our remoteness and lack of
13 the critical mass means it's not a profitable environment
14 for a business that the bottom line is their number one
15 objective.

16 We see that in the present Administration's
17 discussions on health care where managed competition
18 won't work in Alaska. The rural conditions will not
19 support managed competition, and they shifted over to
20 managed cooperation as a way to possibly deal with the
21 uniqueness of the remoteness and the small populations --

22 I very much urge you to take into account
23 concerns from the rural areas and make sure that they are
24 included in any further proposals as they go forward and
25 you ask the different companies that are presenting

1 things to you to provide enough detail so that we know
2 these things.

3 I think that if the rural areas are priced
4 out of the communications formats that there will be a
5 lot of harm to our communities and I just think that that
6 is, you know, we're U.S. citizens like everybody else on
7 that, that we should have the opportunity to -- that some
8 of the larger communities have, too.

9 That's some of the points I want to bring up
10 and we'll be participating and be glad to provide
11 additional information as it comes along. We have lots
12 of studies and reports on ~~income levels~~, the fact that
13 ~~our people~~ are below the poverty line on many factors,
14 we're in the middle of a population boom. Our population
15 is expected to double every 23 years, just you name it.
16 All the factors are stacked against us on that. So I
17 just urge you to keep that in account as you go forward,
18 and the uniqueness, and I will wrap up and thank you for
19 the time.

20 COMMISSIONER BARRETT: Thank you very much,
21 Ms. Kitka. And I would like for you to, 'f you want to
22 supplement the record with some of the data you talked
23 about in terms of employment and population, we would
24 appreciate it very much

25 Back to you, Commissioner Knowles.

1 the next time. Thank you very kindly.

2 Can we continue, Commissioner Knowles?

3 COMMISSIONER KNOWLES: We certainly may.

4 I'd like to ask Willie Hensley to testify next and Former
5 Representative Boucher will be next on the list.

6 MR. HENSLEY: Thank you, Madamn Chairman. I
7 appreciate the opportunity to testify. I might also add
8 that Senator Adams, my friend and relative who also
9 occupies the State Senate seat I used to have from up
10 north and out west would like to have been here to make
11 comments. He has seen my testimony. He identifies with
12 it and he asked me to state that.

13

13 I am Willie ly Hensley and I am president of
14 Nana Regional Corporation. We have about 8,000
15 shareholders, primarily located in Northwest Alaska in 11
16 villages, as well as other locations around the State. I
17 am a Director of Alascom and have been so since the
18 1970s. My testimony would be no different were I not a
19 Director of Alascom. I feel that the company has made an
20 excellent effort over the years to provide modern
21 communications to the smallest villages and its directors
22 come from all regions of our vast state.

23 As a native Alaskan, I've seen the growth
24 and improvement of communications in Alaska almost since
25 the days of the sled dog mail carriers. Our small

1 communities are no longer the isolated back waters of
2 America that they used to be. Unlike earlier times, we
3 are tied to the rest of Alaska as a consequence of modern
4 communications.

5 Alaska, because of its vast size and varied
6 cultures, from the Yupik in the southwest part of Alaska
7 to the Inalik of the north and western Alaska to the
8 Athabaskans of the great interior region, the Aleuts of
9 the Chain, Aleutian Chain, and the Tlingit and Haida of
10 of the southeast of Alaska, all are now tuned in together
11 with the population centers of our state. This has not
12 always been the case.

13 I am not impressed, quite frankly, with
14 timing and notice of the hearing. This issue will have
15 such an impact on the future of rural communities that
16 every effort should have been made to advertise the
17 hearings and descriptions of the proposals made known
18 throughout the State. This is the worst possible time to
19 convene a teleconference. Everybody in rural Alaska and
20 many in urban Alaska are out frantically trying to earn
21 enough to survive throughout the winter or to enjoy the
22 short summer months. As busy a commissioners may be, on
23 an issue of this import, physical presence is important
24 to get the full flavor of people's opinions on this
25 issue.

1 Rural Alaska has some of the most difficult
2 and intransigent problems in the country. People in the
3 villages are in a economic twilight zone where the
4 economy is part hunting and fishing for family
5 consumption and part modern. We have the highest
6 unemployment rate in the nation, the highest cost of
7 living, the coldest weather, the worst sanitary
8 conditions, serious health problems due to lack of water
9 and sanitary sewer facilities, and some of the highest
10 rates of suicide and alcohol addiction. Yet there have
11 been major improvements in the last 20 years. These
12 problems these 200 communities face is that there is a
13 danger of falling back because these improvements in
14 housing, communications, education facilities, electric
15 generation and community facilities is due to the State
16 support for oil earnings. The next five or ten years
17 will see the reduction in income to support important
18 services like modern day communications. Rural Alaska is
19 simply too vast, too costly, too impoverished and too
20 sparsely populated to provide modern communications
21 without some assistance from your agency.

22 I would urge you to pay special
23 consideration to the need for affordable universal
24 service for rural Alaskans.

25 Thank you, Madamn Chairman.