

“(3) OPPORTUNITIES TO TESTIFY.—The Commission shall provide opportunities for representatives of the general public to testify.

“(4) ADDITIONAL RULES.—The Commission may adopt other rules as necessary to carry out this section.

“(h) GIFTS, BEQUESTS, AND DEVICES.—The Commission may accept, use, and dispose of gifts, bequests, or devises of services or property, both real (including the use of office space) and personal, for the purpose of aiding or facilitating the work of the Commission. Gifts or grants not used at the termination of the Commission shall be returned to the donor or grantee.

“(l)[i] TERMINATION.—The Commission shall terminate 30 days after the submission of the report under subsection (d) or November 30, 2000, whichever occurs earlier.

“(m)[j] INAPPLICABILITY OF FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT.—The Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall not apply to the Commission.”

## PART II—DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETITIVE MARKETS

### § 251. Interconnection

#### (a) General duty of telecommunications carriers

Each telecommunications carrier has the duty—

- (1) to interconnect directly or indirectly with the facilities and equipment of other telecommunications carriers; and
- (2) not to install network features, functions, or capabilities that do not comply with the guidelines and standards established pursuant to section 255 or 256 of this title.

#### (b) Obligations of all local exchange carriers

Each local exchange carrier has the following duties:

##### (1) Resale

The duty not to prohibit, and not to impose unreasonable or discriminatory conditions or limitations on, the resale of its telecommunications services.

##### (2) Number portability

The duty to provide, to the extent technically feasible, number portability in accordance with requirements prescribed by the Commission.

##### (3) Dialing parity

The duty to provide dialing parity to competing providers of telephone exchange service and telephone toll service, and the duty to permit all such providers to have nondiscriminatory access to telephone numbers, operator services, directory assistance, and directory listing, with no unreasonable dialing delays.

##### (4) Access to rights-of-way

The duty to afford access to the poles, ducts, conduits, and rights-of-way of such carrier to competing providers of telecommunications services on rates, terms, and conditions that are consistent with section 224 of this title.

##### (5) Reciprocal compensation

The duty to establish reciprocal compensation arrangements for the transport and termination of telecommunications.

#### (c) Additional obligations of incumbent local exchange carriers

In addition to the duties contained in subsection (b) of this section, each incumbent local exchange carrier has the following duties:

#### (1) Duty to negotiate

The duty to negotiate in good faith in accordance with section 252 of this title the particular terms and conditions of agreements to fulfill the duties described in paragraphs (1) through (5) of subsection (b) of this section and this subsection. The requesting telecommunications carrier also has the duty to negotiate in good faith the terms and conditions of such agreements.

#### (2) Interconnection

The duty to provide, for the facilities and equipment of any requesting telecommunications carrier, interconnection with the local exchange carrier's network—

(A) for the transmission and routing of telephone exchange service and exchange access;

(B) at any technically feasible point within the carrier's network;

(C) that is at least equal in quality to that provided by the local exchange carrier to itself or to any subsidiary, affiliate, or any other party to which the carrier provides interconnection; and

(D) on rates, terms, and conditions that are just, reasonable, and nondiscriminatory, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the agreement and the requirements of this section and section 252 of this title.

#### (3) Unbundled access

The duty to provide, to any requesting telecommunications carrier for the provision of a telecommunications service, nondiscriminatory access to network elements on an unbundled basis at any technically feasible point on rates, terms, and conditions that are just, reasonable, and nondiscriminatory in accordance with the terms and conditions of the agreement and the requirements of this section and section 252 of this title. An incumbent local exchange carrier shall provide such unbundled network elements in a manner that allows requesting carriers to combine such elements in order to provide such telecommunications service.

#### (4) Resale

The duty—

(A) to offer for resale at wholesale rates any telecommunications service that the carrier provides at retail to subscribers who are not telecommunications carriers; and

(B) not to prohibit, and not to impose unreasonable or discriminatory conditions or limitations on, the resale of such telecommunications service, except that a State commission may, consistent with regulations prescribed by the Commission under this section, prohibit a reseller that obtains at wholesale rates a telecommunications service that is available at retail only to a category of subscribers from offering such service to a different category of subscribers.

#### (5) Notice of changes

The duty to provide reasonable public notice of changes in the information necessary for the transmission and routing of services using

that local exchange carrier's facilities or networks, as well as of any other changes that would affect the interoperability of those facilities and networks.

**(6) Collocation**

The duty to provide, on rates, terms, and conditions that are just, reasonable, and non-discriminatory, for physical collocation of equipment necessary for interconnection or access to unbundled network elements at the premises of the local exchange carrier, except that the carrier may provide for virtual collocation if the local exchange carrier demonstrates to the State commission that physical collocation is not practical for technical reasons or because of space limitations.

**(d) Implementation**

**(1) In general**

Within 6 months after February 8, 1996, the Commission shall complete all actions necessary to establish regulations to implement the requirements of this section.

**(2) Access standards**

In determining what network elements should be made available for purposes of subsection (c)(3) of this section, the Commission shall consider, at a minimum, whether—

(A) access to such network elements as are proprietary in nature is necessary; and

(B) the failure to provide access to such network elements would impair the ability of the telecommunications carrier seeking access to provide the services that it seeks to offer.

**(3) Preservation of State access regulations**

In prescribing and enforcing regulations to implement the requirements of this section, the Commission shall not preclude the enforcement of any regulation, order, or policy of a State commission that—

(A) establishes access and interconnection obligations of local exchange carriers;

(B) is consistent with the requirements of this section; and

(C) does not substantially prevent implementation of the requirements of this section and the purposes of this part.

**(e) Numbering administration**

**(1) Commission authority and jurisdiction**

The Commission shall create or designate one or more impartial entities to administer telecommunications numbering and to make such numbers available on an equitable basis. The Commission shall have exclusive jurisdiction over those portions of the North American Numbering Plan that pertain to the United States. Nothing in this paragraph shall preclude the Commission from delegating to State commissions or other entities all or any portion of such jurisdiction.

**(2) Costs**

The cost of establishing telecommunications numbering administration arrangements and number portability shall be borne by all telecommunications carriers on a competitively neutral basis as determined by the Commission.

**(3) Universal emergency telephone number**

The Commission and any agency or entity to which the Commission has delegated authority under this subsection shall designate 9-1-1 as the universal emergency telephone number within the United States for reporting an emergency to appropriate authorities and requesting assistance. The designation shall apply to both wireline and wireless telephone service. In making the designation, the Commission (and any such agency or entity) shall provide appropriate transition periods for areas in which 9-1-1 is not in use as an emergency telephone number on October 26, 1999.

**(f) Exemptions, suspensions, and modifications**

**(1) Exemption for certain rural telephone companies**

**(A) Exemption**

Subsection (c) of this section shall not apply to a rural telephone company until (i) such company has received a bona fide request for interconnection, services, or network elements, and (ii) the State commission determines (under subparagraph (B)) that such request is not unduly economically burdensome, is technically feasible, and is consistent with section 254 of this title (other than subsections (b)(7) and (c)(1)(D) thereof).

**(B) State termination of exemption and implementation schedule**

The party making a bona fide request of a rural telephone company for interconnection, services, or network elements shall submit a notice of its request to the State commission. The State commission shall conduct an inquiry for the purpose of determining whether to terminate the exemption under subparagraph (A). Within 120 days after the State commission receives notice of the request, the State commission shall terminate the exemption if the request is not unduly economically burdensome, is technically feasible, and is consistent with section 254 of this title (other than subsections (b)(7) and (c)(1)(D) thereof). Upon termination of the exemption, a State commission shall establish an implementation schedule for compliance with the request that is consistent in time and manner with Commission regulations.

**(C) Limitation on exemption**

The exemption provided by this paragraph shall not apply with respect to a request under subsection (c) of this section from a cable operator providing video programming, and seeking to provide any telecommunications service, in the area in which the rural telephone company provides video programming. The limitation contained in this subparagraph shall not apply to a rural telephone company that is providing video programming on February 8, 1996.

**(2) Suspensions and modifications for rural carriers**

A local exchange carrier with fewer than 2 percent of the Nation's subscriber lines in-

stalled in the aggregate nationwide may petition a State commission for a suspension or modification of the application of a requirement or requirements of subsection (b) or (c) of this section to telephone exchange service facilities specified in such petition. The State commission shall grant such petition to the extent that, and for such duration as, the State commission determines that such suspension or modification—

(A) is necessary—

(i) to avoid a significant adverse economic impact on users of telecommunications services generally;

(ii) to avoid imposing a requirement that is unduly economically burdensome; or

(iii) to avoid imposing a requirement that is technically infeasible; and

(B) is consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity.

The State commission shall act upon any petition filed under this paragraph within 180 days after receiving such petition. Pending such action, the State commission may suspend enforcement of the requirement or requirements to which the petition applies with respect to the petitioning carrier or carriers.

**(g) Continued enforcement of exchange access and interconnection requirements**

On and after February 8, 1996, each local exchange carrier, to the extent that it provides wireline services, shall provide exchange access, information access, and exchange services for such access to interexchange carriers and information service providers in accordance with the same equal access and nondiscriminatory interconnection restrictions and obligations (including receipt of compensation) that apply to such carrier on the date immediately preceding February 8, 1996, under any court order, consent decree, or regulation, order, or policy of the Commission, until such restrictions and obligations are explicitly superseded by regulations prescribed by the Commission after February 8, 1996. During the period beginning on February 8, 1996, and until such restrictions and obligations are so superseded, such restrictions and obligations shall be enforceable in the same manner as regulations of the Commission.

**(h) “Incumbent local exchange carrier” defined**

**(1) Definition**

For purposes of this section, the term “incumbent local exchange carrier” means, with respect to an area, the local exchange carrier that—

(A) on February 8, 1996, provided telephone exchange service in such area; and

(B)(i) on February 8, 1996, was deemed to be a member of the exchange carrier association pursuant to section 69.601(b) of the Commission’s regulations (47 C.F.R. 69.601(b)); or

(ii) is a person or entity that, on or after February 8, 1996, became a successor or assign of a member described in clause (i).

**(2) Treatment of comparable carriers as incumbents**

The Commission may, by rule, provide for the treatment of a local exchange carrier (or

class or category thereof) as an incumbent local exchange carrier for purposes of this section if—

(A) such carrier occupies a position in the market for telephone exchange service within an area that is comparable to the position occupied by a carrier described in paragraph (1);

(B) such carrier has substantially replaced an incumbent local exchange carrier described in paragraph (1); and

(C) such treatment is consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity and the purposes of this section.

**(i) Savings provision**

Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or otherwise affect the Commission’s authority under section 201 of this title.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §251, as added Pub. L. 104–104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 61; amended Pub. L. 106–81, §3(a), Oct. 26, 1999, 113 Stat. 1287.)

AMENDMENTS

1999—Subsec. (e)(3). Pub. L. 106–81 added par. (3).

**§ 252. Procedures for negotiation, arbitration, and approval of agreements**

**(a) Agreements arrived at through negotiation**

**(1) Voluntary negotiations**

Upon receiving a request for interconnection, services, or network elements pursuant to section 251 of this title, an incumbent local exchange carrier may negotiate and enter into a binding agreement with the requesting telecommunications carrier or carriers without regard to the standards set forth in subsections (b) and (c) of section 251 of this title. The agreement shall include a detailed schedule of itemized charges for interconnection and each service or network element included in the agreement. The agreement, including any interconnection agreement negotiated before February 8, 1996, shall be submitted to the State commission under subsection (e) of this section.

**(2) Mediation**

Any party negotiating an agreement under this section may, at any point in the negotiation, ask a State commission to participate in the negotiation and to mediate any differences arising in the course of the negotiation.

**(b) Agreements arrived at through compulsory arbitration**

**(1) Arbitration**

During the period from the 135th to the 160th day (inclusive) after the date on which an incumbent local exchange carrier receives a request for negotiation under this section, the carrier or any other party to the negotiation may petition a State commission to arbitrate any open issues.

**(2) Duty of petitioner**

(A) A party that petitions a State commission under paragraph (1) shall, at the same time as it submits the petition, provide the State commission all relevant documentation concerning—

- (i) the unresolved issues;
- (ii) the position of each of the parties with respect to those issues; and
- (iii) any other issue discussed and resolved by the parties.

(B) A party petitioning a State commission under paragraph (1) shall provide a copy of the petition and any documentation to the other party or parties not later than the day on which the State commission receives the petition.

**(3) Opportunity to respond**

A non-petitioning party to a negotiation under this section may respond to the other party's petition and provide such additional information as it wishes within 25 days after the State commission receives the petition.

**(4) Action by State commission**

(A) The State commission shall limit its consideration of any petition under paragraph (1) (and any response thereto) to the issues set forth in the petition and in the response, if any, filed under paragraph (3).

(B) The State commission may require the petitioning party and the responding party to provide such information as may be necessary for the State commission to reach a decision on the unresolved issues. If any party refuses or fails unreasonably to respond on a timely basis to any reasonable request from the State commission, then the State commission may proceed on the basis of the best information available to it from whatever source derived.

(C) The State commission shall resolve each issue set forth in the petition and the response, if any, by imposing appropriate conditions as required to implement subsection (c) of this section upon the parties to the agreement, and shall conclude the resolution of any unresolved issues not later than 9 months after the date on which the local exchange carrier received the request under this section.

**(5) Refusal to negotiate**

The refusal of any other party to the negotiation to participate further in the negotiations, to cooperate with the State commission in carrying out its function as an arbitrator, or to continue to negotiate in good faith in the presence, or with the assistance, of the State commission shall be considered a failure to negotiate in good faith.

**(c) Standards for arbitration**

In resolving by arbitration under subsection (b) of this section any open issues and imposing conditions upon the parties to the agreement, a State commission shall—

- (1) ensure that such resolution and conditions meet the requirements of section 251 of this title, including the regulations prescribed by the Commission pursuant to section 251 of this title;
- (2) establish any rates for interconnection, services, or network elements according to subsection (d) of this section; and
- (3) provide a schedule for implementation of the terms and conditions by the parties to the agreement.

**(d) Pricing standards**

**(1) Interconnection and network element charges**

Determinations by a State commission of the just and reasonable rate for the interconnection of facilities and equipment for purposes of subsection (c)(2) of section 251 of this title, and the just and reasonable rate for network elements for purposes of subsection (c)(3) of such section—

(A) shall be—

- (i) based on the cost (determined without reference to a rate-of-return or other rate-based proceeding) of providing the interconnection or network element (whichever is applicable), and
- (ii) nondiscriminatory, and

(B) may include a reasonable profit.

**(2) Charges for transport and termination of traffic**

**(A) In general**

For the purposes of compliance by an incumbent local exchange carrier with section 251(b)(5) of this title, a State commission shall not consider the terms and conditions for reciprocal compensation to be just and reasonable unless—

- (i) such terms and conditions provide for the mutual and reciprocal recovery by each carrier of costs associated with the transport and termination on each carrier's network facilities of calls that originate on the network facilities of the other carrier; and
- (ii) such terms and conditions determine such costs on the basis of a reasonable approximation of the additional costs of terminating such calls.

(B) Rules of construction

This paragraph shall not be construed—

- (i) to preclude arrangements that afford the mutual recovery of costs through the offsetting of reciprocal obligations, including arrangements that waive mutual recovery (such as bill-and-keep arrangements); or
- (ii) to authorize the Commission or any State commission to engage in any rate regulation proceeding to establish with particularity the additional costs of transporting or terminating calls, or to require carriers to maintain records with respect to the additional costs of such calls.

(3) Wholesale prices for telecommunications services

**(3) Wholesale prices for telecommunications services**

For the purposes of section 251(c)(4) of this title, a State commission shall determine wholesale rates on the basis of retail rates charged to subscribers for the telecommunications service requested, excluding the portion thereof attributable to any marketing, billing, collection, and other costs that will be avoided by the local exchange carrier.

**(e) Approval by State commission**

**(1) Approval required**

Any interconnection agreement adopted by negotiation or arbitration shall be submitted

for approval to the State commission. A State commission to which an agreement is submitted shall approve or reject the agreement, with written findings as to any deficiencies.

**(2) Grounds for rejection**

The State commission may only reject—

(A) an agreement (or any portion thereof) adopted by negotiation under subsection (a) of this section if it finds that—

(i) the agreement (or portion thereof) discriminates against a telecommunications carrier not a party to the agreement; or

(ii) the implementation of such agreement or portion is not consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity; or

(B) an agreement (or any portion thereof) adopted by arbitration under subsection (b) of this section if it finds that the agreement does not meet the requirements of section 251 of this title, including the regulations prescribed by the Commission pursuant to section 251 of this title, or the standards set forth in subsection (d) of this section.

**(3) Preservation of authority**

Notwithstanding paragraph (2), but subject to section 253 of this title, nothing in this section shall prohibit a State commission from establishing or enforcing other requirements of State law in its review of an agreement, including requiring compliance with intrastate telecommunications service quality standards or requirements.

**(4) Schedule for decision**

If the State commission does not act to approve or reject the agreement within 90 days after submission by the parties of an agreement adopted by negotiation under subsection (a) of this section, or within 30 days after submission by the parties of an agreement adopted by arbitration under subsection (b) of this section, the agreement shall be deemed approved. No State court shall have jurisdiction to review the action of a State commission in approving or rejecting an agreement under this section.

**(5) Commission to act if State will not act**

If a State commission fails to act to carry out its responsibility under this section in any proceeding or other matter under this section, then the Commission shall issue an order preempting the State commission's jurisdiction of that proceeding or matter within 90 days after being notified (or taking notice) of such failure, and shall assume the responsibility of the State commission under this section with respect to the proceeding or matter and act for the State commission.

**(6) Review of State commission actions**

In a case in which a State fails to act as described in paragraph (5), the proceeding by the Commission under such paragraph and any judicial review of the Commission's actions shall be the exclusive remedies for a State commission's failure to act. In any case in which a State commission makes a determination

under this section, any party aggrieved by such determination may bring an action in an appropriate Federal district court to determine whether the agreement or statement meets the requirements of section 251 of this title and this section.

**(f) Statements of generally available terms**

**(1) In general**

A Bell operating company may prepare and file with a State commission a statement of the terms and conditions that such company generally offers within that State to comply with the requirements of section 251 of this title and the regulations thereunder and the standards applicable under this section.

**(2) State commission review**

A State commission may not approve such statement unless such statement complies with subsection (d) of this section and section 251 of this title and the regulations thereunder. Except as provided in section 253 of this title, nothing in this section shall prohibit a State commission from establishing or enforcing other requirements of State law in its review of such statement, including requiring compliance with intrastate telecommunications service quality standards or requirements.

**(3) Schedule for review**

The State commission to which a statement is submitted shall, not later than 60 days after the date of such submission—

(A) complete the review of such statement under paragraph (2) (including any reconsideration thereof), unless the submitting carrier agrees to an extension of the period for such review; or

(B) permit such statement to take effect.

**(4) Authority to continue review**

Paragraph (3) shall not preclude the State commission from continuing to review a statement that has been permitted to take effect under subparagraph (B) of such paragraph or from approving or disapproving such statement under paragraph (2).

**(5) Duty to negotiate not affected**

The submission or approval of a statement under this subsection shall not relieve a Bell operating company of its duty to negotiate the terms and conditions of an agreement under section 251 of this title.

**(g) Consolidation of State proceedings**

Where not inconsistent with the requirements of this chapter, a State commission may, to the extent practical, consolidate proceedings under sections 214(e), 251(f), 253 of this title, and this section in order to reduce administrative burdens on telecommunications carriers, other parties to the proceedings, and the State commission in carrying out its responsibilities under this chapter.

**(h) Filing required**

A State commission shall make a copy of each agreement approved under subsection (e) of this section and each statement approved under subsection (f) of this section available for public in-

spection and copying within 10 days after the agreement or statement is approved. The State commission may charge a reasonable and non-discriminatory fee to the parties to the agreement or to the party filing the statement to cover the costs of approving and filing such agreement or statement.

**(i) Availability to other telecommunications carriers**

A local exchange carrier shall make available any interconnection, service, or network element provided under an agreement approved under this section to which it is a party to any other requesting telecommunications carrier upon the same terms and conditions as those provided in the agreement.

**(j) “Incumbent local exchange carrier” defined**

For purposes of this section, the term “incumbent local exchange carrier” has the meaning provided in section 251(h) of this title.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §252, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 66.)

REFERENCES IN TEXT

This chapter, referred to in subsec. (g), was in the original “this Act”, meaning act June 19, 1934, ch. 652, 48 Stat. 1064, known as the Communications Act of 1934, which is classified principally to this chapter. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see section 609 of this title and Tables.

**§ 253. Removal of barriers to entry**

**(a) In general**

No State or local statute or regulation, or other State or local legal requirement, may prohibit or have the effect of prohibiting the ability of any entity to provide any interstate or intrastate telecommunications service.

**(b) State regulatory authority**

Nothing in this section shall affect the ability of a State to impose, on a competitively neutral basis and consistent with section 254 of this title, requirements necessary to preserve and advance universal service, protect the public safety and welfare, ensure the continued quality of telecommunications services, and safeguard the rights of consumers.

**(c) State and local government authority**

Nothing in this section affects the authority of a State or local government to manage the public rights-of-way or to require fair and reasonable compensation from telecommunications providers, on a competitively neutral and non-discriminatory basis, for use of public rights-of-way on a nondiscriminatory basis, if the compensation required is publicly disclosed by such government.

**(d) Preemption**

If, after notice and an opportunity for public comment, the Commission determines that a State or local government has permitted or imposed any statute, regulation, or legal requirement that violates subsection (a) or (b) of this section, the Commission shall preempt the enforcement of such statute, regulation, or legal requirement to the extent necessary to correct such violation or inconsistency.

**(e) Commercial mobile service providers**

Nothing in this section shall affect the application of section 332(c)(3) of this title to commercial mobile service providers.

**(f) Rural markets**

It shall not be a violation of this section for a State to require a telecommunications carrier that seeks to provide telephone exchange service or exchange access in a service area served by a rural telephone company to meet the requirements in section 214(e)(1) of this title for designation as an eligible telecommunications carrier for that area before being permitted to provide such service. This subsection shall not apply—

(1) to a service area served by a rural telephone company that has obtained an exemption, suspension, or modification of section 251(c)(4) of this title that effectively prevents a competitor from meeting the requirements of section 214(e)(1) of this title; and

(2) to a provider of commercial mobile services.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §253, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 70.)

**§ 254. Universal service**

**(a) Procedures to review universal service requirements**

**(1) Federal-State Joint Board on universal service**

Within one month after February 8, 1996, the Commission shall institute and refer to a Federal-State Joint Board under section 410(c) of this title a proceeding to recommend changes to any of its regulations in order to implement sections 214(e) of this title and this section, including the definition of the services that are supported by Federal universal service support mechanisms and a specific timetable for completion of such recommendations. In addition to the members of the Joint Board required under section 410(c) of this title, one member of such Joint Board shall be a State-appointed utility consumer advocate nominated by a national organization of State utility consumer advocates. The Joint Board shall, after notice and opportunity for public comment, make its recommendations to the Commission 9 months after February 8, 1996.

**(2) Commission action**

The Commission shall initiate a single proceeding to implement the recommendations from the Joint Board required by paragraph (1) and shall complete such proceeding within 15 months after February 8, 1996. The rules established by such proceeding shall include a definition of the services that are supported by Federal universal service support mechanisms and a specific timetable for implementation. Thereafter, the Commission shall complete any proceeding to implement subsequent recommendations from any Joint Board on universal service within one year after receiving such recommendations.

**(b) Universal service principles**

The Joint Board and the Commission shall base policies for the preservation and advance-

ment of universal service on the following principles:

**(1) Quality and rates**

Quality services should be available at just, reasonable, and affordable rates.

**(2) Access to advanced services**

Access to advanced telecommunications and information services should be provided in all regions of the Nation.

**(3) Access in rural and high cost areas**

Consumers in all regions of the Nation, including low-income consumers and those in rural, insular, and high cost areas, should have access to telecommunications and information services, including interexchange services and advanced telecommunications and information services, that are reasonably comparable to those services provided in urban areas and that are available at rates that are reasonably comparable to rates charged for similar services in urban areas.

**(4) Equitable and nondiscriminatory contributions**

All providers of telecommunications services should make an equitable and nondiscriminatory contribution to the preservation and advancement of universal service.

**(5) Specific and predictable support mechanisms**

There should be specific, predictable and sufficient Federal and State mechanisms to preserve and advance universal service.

**(6) Access to advanced telecommunications services for schools, health care, and libraries**

Elementary and secondary schools and classrooms, health care providers, and libraries should have access to advanced telecommunications services as described in subsection (h) of this section.

**(7) Additional principles**

Such other principles as the Joint Board and the Commission determine are necessary and appropriate for the protection of the public interest, convenience, and necessity and are consistent with this chapter.

**(c) Definition**

**(1) In general**

Universal service is an evolving level of telecommunications services that the Commission shall establish periodically under this section, taking into account advances in telecommunications and information technologies and services. The Joint Board in recommending, and the Commission in establishing, the definition of the services that are supported by Federal universal service support mechanisms shall consider the extent to which such telecommunications services—

(A) are essential to education, public health, or public safety;

(B) have, through the operation of market choices by customers, been subscribed to by a substantial majority of residential customers;

(C) are being deployed in public telecommunications networks by telecommunications carriers; and

(D) are consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity.

**(2) Alterations and modifications**

The Joint Board may, from time to time, recommend to the Commission modifications in the definition of the services that are supported by Federal universal service support mechanisms.

**(3) Special services**

In addition to the services included in the definition of universal service under paragraph (1), the Commission may designate additional services for such support mechanisms for schools, libraries, and health care providers for the purposes of subsection (h) of this section.

**(d) Telecommunications carrier contribution**

Every telecommunications carrier that provides interstate telecommunications services shall contribute, on an equitable and nondiscriminatory basis, to the specific, predictable, and sufficient mechanisms established by the Commission to preserve and advance universal service. The Commission may exempt a carrier or class of carriers from this requirement if the carrier's telecommunications activities are limited to such an extent that the level of such carrier's contribution to the preservation and advancement of universal service would be de minimis. Any other provider of interstate telecommunications may be required to contribute to the preservation and advancement of universal service if the public interest so requires.

**(e) Universal service support**

After the date on which Commission regulations implementing this section take effect, only an eligible telecommunications carrier designated under section 214(e) of this title shall be eligible to receive specific Federal universal service support. A carrier that receives such support shall use that support only for the provision, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended. Any such support should be explicit and sufficient to achieve the purposes of this section.

**(f) State authority**

A State may adopt regulations not inconsistent with the Commission's rules to preserve and advance universal service. Every telecommunications carrier that provides intrastate telecommunications services shall contribute, on an equitable and nondiscriminatory basis, in a manner determined by the State to the preservation and advancement of universal service in that State. A State may adopt regulations to provide for additional definitions and standards to preserve and advance universal service within that State only to the extent that such regulations adopt additional specific, predictable, and sufficient mechanisms to support such definitions or standards that do not rely on or burden Federal universal service support mechanisms.

**(g) Interexchange and interstate services**

Within 6 months after February 8, 1996, the Commission shall adopt rules to require that the

rates charged by providers of interexchange telecommunications services to subscribers in rural and high cost areas shall be no higher than the rates charged by each such provider to its subscribers in urban areas. Such rules shall also require that a provider of interstate interexchange telecommunications services shall provide such services to its subscribers in each State at rates no higher than the rates charged to its subscribers in any other State.

**(h) Telecommunications services for certain providers**

**(1) In general**

**(A) Health care providers for rural areas**

A telecommunications carrier shall, upon receiving a bona fide request, provide telecommunications services which are necessary for the provision of health care services in a State, including instruction relating to such services, to any public or non-profit health care provider that serves persons who reside in rural areas in that State at rates that are reasonably comparable to rates charged for similar services in urban areas in that State. A telecommunications carrier providing service under this paragraph shall be entitled to have an amount equal to the difference, if any, between the rates for services provided to health care providers for rural areas in a State and the rates for similar services provided to other customers in comparable rural areas in that State treated as a service obligation as a part of its obligation to participate in the mechanisms to preserve and advance universal service.

**(B) Educational providers and libraries**

All telecommunications carriers serving a geographic area shall, upon a bona fide request for any of its services that are within the definition of universal service under subsection (c)(3) of this section, provide such services to elementary schools, secondary schools, and libraries for educational purposes at rates less than the amounts charged for similar services to other parties. The discount shall be an amount that the Commission, with respect to interstate services, and the States, with respect to intrastate services, determine is appropriate and necessary to ensure affordable access to and use of such services by such entities. A telecommunications carrier providing service under this paragraph shall—

(i) have an amount equal to the amount of the discount treated as an offset to its obligation to contribute to the mechanisms to preserve and advance universal service, or

(ii) notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (e) of this section, receive reimbursement utilizing the support mechanisms to preserve and advance universal service.

**(2) Advanced services**

The Commission shall establish competitively neutral rules—

(A) to enhance, to the extent technically feasible and economically reasonable, access

to advanced telecommunications and information services for all public and nonprofit elementary and secondary school classrooms, health care providers, and libraries; and

(B) to define the circumstances under which a telecommunications carrier may be required to connect its network to such public institutional telecommunications users.

**(3) Terms and conditions**

Telecommunications services and network capacity provided to a public institutional telecommunications user under this subsection may not be sold, resold, or otherwise transferred by such user in consideration for money or any other thing of value.

**(4) Eligibility of users**

No entity listed in this subsection shall be entitled to preferential rates or treatment as required by this subsection, if such entity operates as a for-profit business, is a school described in paragraph (7)(A) with an endowment of more than \$50,000,000, or is a library or library consortium not eligible for assistance from a State library administrative agency under the Library Services and Technology Act [20 U.S.C. 9121 et seq.].

**(5) Requirements for certain schools with computers having Internet access**

**(A) Internet safety**

**(i) In general**

Except as provided in clause (ii), an elementary or secondary school having computers with Internet access may not receive services at discount rates under paragraph (1)(B) unless the school, school board, local educational agency, or other authority with responsibility for administration of the school—

(I) submits to the Commission the certifications described in subparagraphs (B) and (C);

(II) submits to the Commission a certification that an Internet safety policy has been adopted and implemented for the school under subsection (l) of this section; and

(III) ensures the use of such computers in accordance with the certifications.

**(ii) Applicability**

The prohibition in clause (i) shall not apply with respect to a school that receives services at discount rates under paragraph (1)(B) only for purposes other than the provision of Internet access, Internet service, or internal connections.

**(iii) Public notice; hearing**

An elementary or secondary school described in clause (i), or the school board, local educational agency, or other authority with responsibility for administration of the school, shall provide reasonable public notice and hold at least one public hearing or meeting to address the proposed Internet safety policy. In the case of an elementary or secondary school other than an elementary or secondary school as de-



fined in section 8801<sup>1</sup> of title 20, the notice and hearing required by this clause may be limited to those members of the public with a relationship to the school.

**(B) Certification with respect to minors**

A certification under this subparagraph is a certification that the school, school board, local educational agency, or other authority with responsibility for administration of the school—

(i) is enforcing a policy of Internet safety for minors that includes monitoring the online activities of minors and the operation of a technology protection measure with respect to any of its computers with Internet access that protects against access through such computers to visual depictions that are—

- (I) obscene;
- (II) child pornography; or
- (III) harmful to minors;

(ii) is enforcing the operation of such technology protection measure during any use of such computers by minors; and

(iii) as part of its Internet safety policy is educating minors about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms and cyberbullying awareness and response.

**(C) Certification with respect to adults**

A certification under this paragraph is a certification that the school, school board, local educational agency, or other authority with responsibility for administration of the school—

(i) is enforcing a policy of Internet safety that includes the operation of a technology protection measure with respect to any of its computers with Internet access that protects against access through such computers to visual depictions that are—

- (I) obscene; or
- (II) child pornography; and

(ii) is enforcing the operation of such technology protection measure during any use of such computers.

**(D) Disabling during adult use**

An administrator, supervisor, or other person authorized by the certifying authority under subparagraph (A)(i) may disable the technology protection measure concerned, during use by an adult, to enable access for bona fide research or other lawful purpose.

**(E) Timing of implementation**

**(i) In general**

Subject to clause (ii) in the case of any school covered by this paragraph as of the effective date of this paragraph under section 1721(h) of the Children's Internet Protection Act, the certification under subparagraphs (B) and (C) shall be made—

(I) with respect to the first program funding year under this subsection following such effective date, not later than

120 days after the beginning of such program funding year; and

(II) with respect to any subsequent program funding year, as part of the application process for such program funding year.

**(ii) Process**

**(I) Schools with Internet safety policy and technology protection measures in place**

A school covered by clause (i) that has in place an Internet safety policy and technology protection measures meeting the requirements necessary for certification under subparagraphs (B) and (C) shall certify its compliance with subparagraphs (B) and (C) during each annual program application cycle under this subsection, except that with respect to the first program funding year after the effective date of this paragraph under section 1721(h) of the Children's Internet Protection Act, the certifications shall be made not later than 120 days after the beginning of such first program funding year.

**(II) Schools without Internet safety policy and technology protection measures in place**

A school covered by clause (i) that does not have in place an Internet safety policy and technology protection measures meeting the requirements necessary for certification under subparagraphs (B) and (C)—

(aa) for the first program year after the effective date of this subsection in which it is applying for funds under this subsection, shall certify that it is undertaking such actions, including any necessary procurement procedures, to put in place an Internet safety policy and technology protection measures meeting the requirements necessary for certification under subparagraphs (B) and (C); and

(bb) for the second program year after the effective date of this subsection in which it is applying for funds under this subsection, shall certify that it is in compliance with subparagraphs (B) and (C).

Any school that is unable to certify compliance with such requirements in such second program year shall be ineligible for services at discount rates or funding in lieu of services at such rates under this subsection for such second year and all subsequent program years under this subsection, until such time as such school comes into compliance with this paragraph.

**(III) Waivers**

Any school subject to subclause (II) that cannot come into compliance with subparagraphs (B) and (C) in such second year program may seek a waiver of subclause (II)(bb) if State or local procurement rules or regulations or competitive

<sup>1</sup> See References in Text note below.

bidding requirements prevent the making of the certification otherwise required by such subclause. A school, school board, local educational agency, or other authority with responsibility for administration of the school shall notify the Commission of the applicability of such subclause to the school. Such notice shall certify that the school in question will be brought into compliance before the start of the third program year after the effective date of this subsection in which the school is applying for funds under this subsection.

**(F) Noncompliance**

**(i) Failure to submit certification**

Any school that knowingly fails to comply with the application guidelines regarding the annual submission of certification required by this paragraph shall not be eligible for services at discount rates or funding in lieu of services at such rates under this subsection.

**(ii) Failure to comply with certification**

Any school that knowingly fails to ensure the use of its computers in accordance with a certification under subparagraphs (B) and (C) shall reimburse any funds and discounts received under this subsection for the period covered by such certification.

**(iii) Remedy of noncompliance**

**(I) Failure to submit**

A school that has failed to submit a certification under clause (i) may remedy the failure by submitting the certification to which the failure relates. Upon submittal of such certification, the school shall be eligible for services at discount rates under this subsection.

**(II) Failure to comply**

A school that has failed to comply with a certification as described in clause (ii) may remedy the failure by ensuring the use of its computers in accordance with such certification. Upon submittal to the Commission of a certification or other appropriate evidence of such remedy, the school shall be eligible for services at discount rates under this subsection.

**(6) Requirements for certain libraries with computers having Internet access**

**(A) Internet safety**

**(i) In general**

Except as provided in clause (ii), a library having one or more computers with Internet access may not receive services at discount rates under paragraph (1)(B) unless the library—

(I) submits to the Commission the certifications described in subparagraphs (B) and (C); and

(II) submits to the Commission a certification that an Internet safety policy has been adopted and implemented for

the library under subsection (I) of this section; and

(III) ensures the use of such computers in accordance with the certifications.

**(ii) Applicability**

The prohibition in clause (i) shall not apply with respect to a library that receives services at discount rates under paragraph (1)(B) only for purposes other than the provision of Internet access, Internet service, or internal connections.

**(iii) Public notice; hearing**

A library described in clause (i) shall provide reasonable public notice and hold at least one public hearing or meeting to address the proposed Internet safety policy.

**(B) Certification with respect to minors**

A certification under this subparagraph is a certification that the library—

(i) is enforcing a policy of Internet safety that includes the operation of a technology protection measure with respect to any of its computers with Internet access that protects against access through such computers to visual depictions that are—

(I) obscene;

(II) child pornography; or

(III) harmful to minors; and

(ii) is enforcing the operation of such technology protection measure during any use of such computers by minors.

**(C) Certification with respect to adults**

A certification under this paragraph is a certification that the library—

(i) is enforcing a policy of Internet safety that includes the operation of a technology protection measure with respect to any of its computers with Internet access that protects against access through such computers to visual depictions that are—

(I) obscene; or

(II) child pornography; and

(ii) is enforcing the operation of such technology protection measure during any use of such computers.

**(D) Disabling during adult use**

An administrator, supervisor, or other person authorized by the certifying authority under subparagraph (A)(i) may disable the technology protection measure concerned, during use by an adult, to enable access for bona fide research or other lawful purpose.

**(E) Timing of implementation**

**(i) In general**

Subject to clause (ii) in the case of any library covered by this paragraph as of the effective date of this paragraph under section 1721(h) of the Children's Internet Protection Act, the certification under subparagraphs (B) and (C) shall be made—

(I) with respect to the first program funding year under this subsection following such effective date, not later than 120 days after the beginning of such program funding year; and

(II) with respect to any subsequent program funding year, as part of the application process for such program funding year.

**(ii) Process**

**(I) Libraries with Internet safety policy and technology protection measures in place**

A library covered by clause (i) that has in place an Internet safety policy and technology protection measures meeting the requirements necessary for certification under subparagraphs (B) and (C) shall certify its compliance with subparagraphs (B) and (C) during each annual program application cycle under this subsection, except that with respect to the first program funding year after the effective date of this paragraph under section 1721(h) of the Children's Internet Protection Act, the certifications shall be made not later than 120 days after the beginning of such first program funding year.

**(II) Libraries without Internet safety policy and technology protection measures in place**

A library covered by clause (i) that does not have in place an Internet safety policy and technology protection measures meeting the requirements necessary for certification under subparagraphs (B) and (C)—

(aa) for the first program year after the effective date of this subsection in which it is applying for funds under this subsection, shall certify that it is undertaking such actions, including any necessary procurement procedures, to put in place an Internet safety policy and technology protection measures meeting the requirements necessary for certification under subparagraphs (B) and (C); and

(bb) for the second program year after the effective date of this subsection in which it is applying for funds under this subsection, shall certify that it is in compliance with subparagraphs (B) and (C).

Any library that is unable to certify compliance with such requirements in such second program year shall be ineligible for services at discount rates or funding in lieu of services at such rates under this subsection for such second year and all subsequent program years under this subsection, until such time as such library comes into compliance with this paragraph.

**(III) Waivers**

Any library subject to subclause (II) that cannot come into compliance with subparagraphs (B) and (C) in such second year may seek a waiver of subclause (II)(bb) if State or local procurement rules or regulations or competitive bidding requirements prevent the making of the certification otherwise required by

such subclause. A library, library board, or other authority with responsibility for administration of the library shall notify the Commission of the applicability of such subclause to the library. Such notice shall certify that the library in question will be brought into compliance before the start of the third program year after the effective date of this subsection in which the library is applying for funds under this subsection.

**(F) Noncompliance**

**(i) Failure to submit certification**

Any library that knowingly fails to comply with the application guidelines regarding the annual submission of certification required by this paragraph shall not be eligible for services at discount rates or funding in lieu of services at such rates under this subsection.

**(ii) Failure to comply with certification**

Any library that knowingly fails to ensure the use of its computers in accordance with a certification under subparagraphs (B) and (C) shall reimburse all funds and discounts received under this subsection for the period covered by such certification.

**(iii) Remedy of noncompliance**

**(I) Failure to submit**

A library that has failed to submit a certification under clause (i) may remedy the failure by submitting the certification to which the failure relates. Upon submittal of such certification, the library shall be eligible for services at discount rates under this subsection.

**(II) Failure to comply**

A library that has failed to comply with a certification as described in clause (ii) may remedy the failure by ensuring the use of its computers in accordance with such certification. Upon submittal to the Commission of a certification or other appropriate evidence of such remedy, the library shall be eligible for services at discount rates under this subsection.

**(7) Definitions**

For purposes of this subsection:

**(A) Elementary and secondary schools**

The term "elementary and secondary schools" means elementary schools and secondary schools, as defined in section 7801 of title 20.

**(B) Health care provider**

The term "health care provider" means—

(i) post-secondary educational institutions offering health care instruction, teaching hospitals, and medical schools;

(ii) community health centers or health centers providing health care to migrants;

(iii) local health departments or agencies;

(iv) community mental health centers;

(v) not-for-profit hospitals;

- (vi) rural health clinics; and
- (vii) consortia of health care providers consisting of one or more entities described in clauses (i) through (vi).

**(C) Public institutional telecommunications user**

The term “public institutional telecommunications user” means an elementary or secondary school, a library, or a health care provider as those terms are defined in this paragraph.

**(D) Minor**

The term “minor” means any individual who has not attained the age of 17 years.

**(E) Obscene**

The term “obscene” has the meaning given such term in section 1460 of title 18.

**(F) Child pornography**

The term “child pornography” has the meaning given such term in section 2256 of title 18.

**(G) Harmful to minors**

The term “harmful to minors” means any picture, image, graphic image file, or other visual depiction that—

- (i) taken as a whole and with respect to minors, appeals to a prurient interest in nudity, sex, or excretion;
- (ii) depicts, describes, or represents, in a patently offensive way with respect to what is suitable for minors, an actual or simulated sexual act or sexual contact, actual or simulated normal or perverted sexual acts, or a lewd exhibition of the genitals; and
- (iii) taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value as to minors.

**(H) Sexual act; sexual contact**

The terms “sexual act” and “sexual contact” have the meanings given such terms in section 2246 of title 18.

**(I) Technology protection measure**

The term “technology protection measure” means a specific technology that blocks or filters Internet access to the material covered by a certification under paragraph (5) or (6) to which such certification relates.

**(i) Consumer protection**

The Commission and the States should ensure that universal service is available at rates that are just, reasonable, and affordable.

**(j) Lifeline assistance**

Nothing in this section shall affect the collection, distribution, or administration of the Lifeline Assistance Program provided for by the Commission under regulations set forth in section 69.117 of title 47, Code of Federal Regulations, and other related sections of such title.

**(k) Subsidy of competitive services prohibited**

A telecommunications carrier may not use services that are not competitive to subsidize services that are subject to competition. The

Commission, with respect to interstate services, and the States, with respect to intrastate services, shall establish any necessary cost allocation rules, accounting safeguards, and guidelines to ensure that services included in the definition of universal service bear no more than a reasonable share of the joint and common costs of facilities used to provide those services.

**(I) Internet safety policy requirement for schools and libraries**

**(1) In general**

In carrying out its responsibilities under subsection (h) of this section, each school or library to which subsection (h) of this section applies shall—

(A) adopt and implement an Internet safety policy that addresses—

- (i) access by minors to inappropriate matter on the Internet and World Wide Web;
- (ii) the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications;
- (iii) unauthorized access, including so-called “hacking”, and other unlawful activities by minors online;
- (iv) unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors; and
- (v) measures designed to restrict minors’ access to materials harmful to minors; and

(B) provide reasonable public notice and hold at least one public hearing or meeting to address the proposed Internet safety policy.

**(2) Local determination of content**

A determination regarding what matter is inappropriate for minors shall be made by the school board, local educational agency, library, or other authority responsible for making the determination. No agency or instrumentality of the United States Government may—

(A) establish criteria for making such determination;

(B) review the determination made by the certifying school, school board, local educational agency, library, or other authority; or

(C) consider the criteria employed by the certifying school, school board, local educational agency, library, or other authority in the administration of subsection (h)(1)(B) of this section.

**(3) Availability for review**

Each Internet safety policy adopted under this subsection shall be made available to the Commission, upon request of the Commission, by the school, school board, local educational agency, library, or other authority responsible for adopting such Internet safety policy for purposes of the review of such Internet safety policy by the Commission.

**(4) Effective date**

This subsection shall apply with respect to schools and libraries on or after the date that is 120 days after December 21, 2000.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, § 254, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, § 101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 71; amended Pub. L. 104-208, div. A, title I, § 101(e) [title VII, § 709(a)(8)], Sept. 30, 1996, 110 Stat. 3009-233, 3009-313; Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, §§ 1721(a)-(d), 1732], Dec. 21, 2000, 114 Stat. 2763, 2763A-343 to 2763A-350; Pub. L. 107-110, title X, § 1076(hh), Jan. 8, 2002, 115 Stat. 2094; Pub. L. 110-385, title II, § 215, Oct. 10, 2008, 122 Stat. 4104.)

## REFERENCES IN TEXT

This chapter, referred to in subsec. (b)(7), was in the original “this Act”, meaning act June 19, 1934, ch. 652, 48 Stat. 1064, known as the Communications Act of 1934, which is classified principally to this chapter. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see section 609 of this title and Tables.

The Library Services and Technology Act, referred to in subsec. (h)(4), is subtitle B (§§ 211-263) of title II of Pub. L. 94-462, as added by Pub. L. 104-208, div. A, title I, § 101(e) [title VII, § 702], Sept. 30, 1996, 110 Stat. 3009-233, 3009-295, which is classified generally to subchapter II (§ 9121 et seq.) of chapter 72 of Title 20, Education. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see Short Title note set out under section 9101 of Title 20 and Tables.

Section 8801 of title 20, referred to in subsec. (h)(5)(A)(iii), was repealed by Pub. L. 107-110, title X, § 1011(5)(C), Jan. 8, 2002, 115 Stat. 1986. See section 7801 of Title 20, Education.

For the effective date of this paragraph under section 1721(h) of the Children’s Internet Protection Act, referred to in subsec. (h)(5)(E), (6)(E), as 120 days after Dec. 21, 2000, see § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title VII, § 1721(h)] of Pub. L. 106-554, set out as an Effective Date of 2000 Amendment note below.

The effective date of this subsection, referred to in subsec. (h)(5)(E), (6)(E), probably means the effective date of subsec. (h)(5) and (6) which is 120 days after Dec. 21, 2000, see § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title VII, § 1721(h)] of Pub. L. 106-554, set out as an Effective Date of 2000 Amendment note below.

## AMENDMENTS

2008—Subsec. (h)(5)(B)(iii). Pub. L. 110-385 added cl. (iii).

2002—Subsec. (h)(7)(A). Pub. L. 107-110 substituted “section 7801” for “paragraphs (14) and (25), respectively, of section 8801”.

2000—Subsec. (h)(4). Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, § 1721(d)], substituted “paragraph (7)(A)” for “paragraph (5)(A)”.

Subsec. (h)(5). Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, § 1721(a)(2)], added par. (5). Former par. (5) redesignated (7).

Subsec. (h)(6). Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, § 1721(b)], added par. (6).

Subsec. (h)(7). Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, § 1721(a)(1)], redesignated par. (5) as (7).

Subsec. (h)(7)(D) to (I). Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, § 1721(c)], added subpars. (D) to (I).

Subsec. (I). Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, § 1732], added subsec. (I).

1996—Subsec. (h)(4). Pub. L. 104-208 substituted “library or library consortium not eligible for assistance from a State library administrative agency under the Library Services and Technology Act” for “library not eligible for participation in State-based plans for funds under title III of the Library Services and Construction Act (20 U.S.C. 335c et seq.)”.

## EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2002 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 107-110 effective Jan. 8, 2002, except with respect to certain noncompetitive programs and competitive programs, see section 5 of Pub. L. 107-110, set out as an Effective Date note under section 6301 of Title 20, Education.

## EFFECTIVE DATE OF 2000 AMENDMENT

Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, § 1721(h)], Dec. 21, 2000, 114 Stat. 2763, 2763A-350, provided that: “The amendments made by this section [amending this section and enacting provisions set out as notes under this section and section 7001 of Title 20, Education] shall take effect 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act [Dec. 21, 2000].”

## REGULATIONS

Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, § 1721(f)], Dec. 21, 2000, 114 Stat. 2763, 2763A-350, provided that:

“(1) REQUIREMENT.—The Federal Communications Commission shall prescribe regulations for purposes of administering the provisions of paragraphs (5) and (6) of section 254(h) of the Communications Act of 1934 [47 U.S.C. 254(h)], as amended by this section.

“(2) DEADLINE.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Commission shall prescribe regulations under paragraph (1) so as to ensure that such regulations take effect 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act [Dec. 21, 2000].”

Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, § 1733], Dec. 21, 2000, 114 Stat. 2763, 2763A-351, provided that: “Not later than 120 days after the date of enactment of this Act [Dec. 21, 2000], the Federal Communications Commission shall prescribe regulations for purposes of section 254(l) of the Communications Act of 1934 [47 U.S.C. 254(l)], as added by section 1732 of this Act.”

## SEPARABILITY

Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, § 1721(e)], Dec. 21, 2000, 114 Stat. 2763, 2763A-350, provided that: “If any provision of paragraph (5) or (6) of section 254(h) of the Communications Act of 1934 [47 U.S.C. 254(h)], as amended by this section, or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of such paragraph and the application of such paragraph to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected thereby.”

## DISCLAIMERS REGARDING INTERNET ACCESS AND PRIVACY

Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, § 1702], Dec. 21, 2000, 114 Stat. 2763, 2763A-336, provided that:

“(a) DISCLAIMER REGARDING CONTENT.—Nothing in this title [see Short Title of 2000 Amendments note set out under section 6301 of Title 20, Education] or the amendments made by this title shall be construed to prohibit a local educational agency, elementary or secondary school, or library from blocking access on the Internet on computers owned or operated by that agency, school, or library to any content other than content covered by this title or the amendments made by this title.

“(b) DISCLAIMER REGARDING PRIVACY.—Nothing in this title or the amendments made by this title shall be construed to require the tracking of Internet use by any identifiable minor or adult user.”

## EXPEDITED REVIEW

Pub. L. 106-554, § 1(a)(4) [div. B, title XVII, § 1741], Dec. 21, 2000, 114 Stat. 2763, 2763A-351, provided that:

“(a) THREE-JUDGE DISTRICT COURT HEARING.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any civil action challenging the constitutionality, on its face, of this title [see Short Title of 2000 Amendments note set out under section 6301 of Title 20, Education] or any amendment made by this title, or any provision thereof, shall be heard by a district court of three judges convened pursuant to the provisions of section 2284 of title 28, United States Code.

“(b) APPELLATE REVIEW.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an interlocutory or final judgment, decree, or order of the court of three judges in an action under subsection (a) holding this title or an amendment made by this title, or any provision thereof, unconstitutional shall be reviewable as a matter of

right by direct appeal to the Supreme Court. Any such appeal shall be filed not more than 20 days after entry of such judgment, decree, or order.”

#### UNIVERSAL SERVICE FUND PAYMENT SCHEDULE

Pub. L. 105-33, title III, §3006, Aug. 5, 1997, 111 Stat. 269, related to appropriations to the Universal Service Fund in support of programs established pursuant to rules implementing this section and adjustment of payments by telecommunications carriers and other providers of interstate telecommunications prior to repeal by Pub. L. 105-119, title VI, §622, Nov. 26, 1997, 111 Stat. 2521. Section 622 of Pub. L. 105-119 provided further that: “This section shall be deemed a section of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 [Pub. L. 105-33, see Tables for classification] for the purposes of section 10213 of that Act (111 Stat. 712) [2 U.S.C. 902 note], and shall be scored pursuant to paragraph (2) of such section.”

### § 255. Access by persons with disabilities

#### (a) Definitions

As used in this section—

##### (1) Disability

The term “disability” has the meaning given to it by section 12102(2)(A)<sup>1</sup> of title 42.

##### (2) Readily achievable

The term “readily achievable” has the meaning given to it by section 12181(9) of title 42.

#### (b) Manufacturing

A manufacturer of telecommunications equipment or customer premises equipment shall ensure that the equipment is designed, developed, and fabricated to be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, if readily achievable.

#### (c) Telecommunications services

A provider of telecommunications service shall ensure that the service is accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, if readily achievable.

#### (d) Compatibility

Whenever the requirements of subsections (b) and (c) of this section are not readily achievable, such a manufacturer or provider shall ensure that the equipment or service is compatible with existing peripheral devices or specialized customer premises equipment commonly used by individuals with disabilities to achieve access, if readily achievable.

#### (e) Guidelines

Within 18 months after February 8, 1996, the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board shall develop guidelines for accessibility of telecommunications equipment and customer premises equipment in conjunction with the Commission. The Board shall review and update the guidelines periodically.

#### (f) No additional private rights authorized

Nothing in this section shall be construed to authorize any private right of action to enforce any requirement of this section or any regulation thereunder. The Commission shall have exclusive jurisdiction with respect to any complaint under this section.

<sup>1</sup> See References in Text note below.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §255, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 75.)

#### REFERENCES IN TEXT

Section 12102 of title 42, referred to in subsec. (a)(1), was amended generally by Pub. L. 110-325, §4(a), Sept. 25, 2008, 122 Stat. 3555, and, as so amended, provisions formerly appearing in par. (2)(A) are now contained in par. (1)(A).

### § 256. Coordination for interconnectivity

#### (a) Purpose

It is the purpose of this section—

(1) to promote nondiscriminatory accessibility by the broadest number of users and vendors of communications products and services to public telecommunications networks used to provide telecommunications service through—

(A) coordinated public telecommunications network planning and design by telecommunications carriers and other providers of telecommunications service; and

(B) public telecommunications network interconnectivity, and interconnectivity of devices with such networks used to provide telecommunications service; and

(2) to ensure the ability of users and information providers to seamlessly and transparently transmit and receive information between and across telecommunications networks.

#### (b) Commission functions

In carrying out the purposes of this section, the Commission—

(1) shall establish procedures for Commission oversight of coordinated network planning by telecommunications carriers and other providers of telecommunications service for the effective and efficient interconnection of public telecommunications networks used to provide telecommunications service; and

(2) may participate, in a manner consistent with its authority and practice prior to February 8, 1996, in the development by appropriate industry standards-setting organizations of public telecommunications network interconnectivity standards that promote access to—

(A) public telecommunications networks used to provide telecommunications service;

(B) network capabilities and services by individuals with disabilities; and

(C) information services by subscribers of rural telephone companies.

#### (c) Commission’s authority

Nothing in this section shall be construed as expanding or limiting any authority that the Commission may have under law in effect before February 8, 1996.

#### (d) “Public telecommunications network interconnectivity” defined

As used in this section, the term “public telecommunications network interconnectivity” means the ability of two or more public telecommunications networks used to provide telecommunications service to communicate and

exchange information without degeneration, and to interact in concert with one another.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §256, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 76.)

### § 257. Market entry barriers proceeding

#### (a) Elimination of barriers

Within 15 months after February 8, 1996, the Commission shall complete a proceeding for the purpose of identifying and eliminating, by regulations pursuant to its authority under this chapter (other than this section), market entry barriers for entrepreneurs and other small businesses in the provision and ownership of telecommunications services and information services, or in the provision of parts or services to providers of telecommunications services and information services.

#### (b) National policy

In carrying out subsection (a) of this section, the Commission shall seek to promote the policies and purposes of this chapter favoring diversity of media voices, vigorous economic competition, technological advancement, and promotion of the public interest, convenience, and necessity.

#### (c) Periodic review

Every 3 years following the completion of the proceeding required by subsection (a) of this section, the Commission shall review and report to Congress on—

(1) any regulations prescribed to eliminate barriers within its jurisdiction that are identified under subsection (a) of this section and that can be prescribed consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity; and

(2) the statutory barriers identified under subsection (a) of this section that the Commission recommends be eliminated, consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §257, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 77.)

#### REFERENCES IN TEXT

This chapter, referred to in subsecs. (a) and (b), was in the original “this Act”, meaning act June 19, 1934, ch. 652, 48 Stat. 1064, known as the Communications Act of 1934, which is classified principally to this chapter. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see section 609 of this title and Tables.

### § 258. Illegal changes in subscriber carrier selections

#### (a) Prohibition

No telecommunications carrier shall submit or execute a change in a subscriber’s selection of a provider of telephone exchange service or telephone toll service except in accordance with such verification procedures as the Commission shall prescribe. Nothing in this section shall preclude any State commission from enforcing such procedures with respect to intrastate services.

#### (b) Liability for charges

Any telecommunications carrier that violates the verification procedures described in sub-

section (a) of this section and that collects charges for telephone exchange service or telephone toll service from a subscriber shall be liable to the carrier previously selected by the subscriber in an amount equal to all charges paid by such subscriber after such violation, in accordance with such procedures as the Commission may prescribe. The remedies provided by this subsection are in addition to any other remedies available by law.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §258, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 77.)

### § 259. Infrastructure sharing

#### (a) Regulations required

The Commission shall prescribe, within one year after February 8, 1996, regulations that require incumbent local exchange carriers (as defined in section 251(h) of this title) to make available to any qualifying carrier such public switched network infrastructure, technology, information, and telecommunications facilities and functions as may be requested by such qualifying carrier for the purpose of enabling such qualifying carrier to provide telecommunications services, or to provide access to information services, in the service area in which such qualifying carrier has requested and obtained designation as an eligible telecommunications carrier under section 214(e) of this title.

#### (b) Terms and conditions of regulations

The regulations prescribed by the Commission pursuant to this section shall—

(1) not require a local exchange carrier to which this section applies to take any action that is economically unreasonable or that is contrary to the public interest;

(2) permit, but shall not require, the joint ownership or operation of public switched network infrastructure and services by or among such local exchange carrier and a qualifying carrier;

(3) ensure that such local exchange carrier will not be treated by the Commission or any State as a common carrier for hire or as offering common carrier services with respect to any infrastructure, technology, information, facilities, or functions made available to a qualifying carrier in accordance with regulations issued pursuant to this section;

(4) ensure that such local exchange carrier makes such infrastructure, technology, information, facilities, or functions available to a qualifying carrier on just and reasonable terms and conditions that permit such qualifying carrier to fully benefit from the economies of scale and scope of such local exchange carrier, as determined in accordance with guidelines prescribed by the Commission in regulations issued pursuant to this section;

(5) establish conditions that promote cooperation between local exchange carriers to which this section applies and qualifying carriers;

(6) not require a local exchange carrier to which this section applies to engage in any infrastructure sharing agreement for any services or access which are to be provided or of-

ferred to consumers by the qualifying carrier in such local exchange carrier's telephone exchange area; and

(7) require that such local exchange carrier file with the Commission or State for public inspection, any tariffs, contracts, or other arrangements showing the rates, terms, and conditions under which such carrier is making available public switched network infrastructure and functions under this section.

**(c) Information concerning deployment of new services and equipment**

A local exchange carrier to which this section applies that has entered into an infrastructure sharing agreement under this section shall provide to each party to such agreement timely information on the planned deployment of telecommunications services and equipment, including any software or upgrades of software integral to the use or operation of such telecommunications equipment.

**(d) "Qualifying carrier" defined**

For purposes of this section, the term "qualifying carrier" means a telecommunications carrier that—

(1) lacks economies of scale or scope, as determined in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Commission pursuant to this section; and

(2) offers telephone exchange service, exchange access, and any other service that is included in universal service, to all consumers without preference throughout the service area for which such carrier has been designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier under section 214(e) of this title.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §259, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 77.)

**§ 260. Provision of telemessaging service**

**(a) Nondiscrimination safeguards**

Any local exchange carrier subject to the requirements of section 251(c) of this title that provides telemessaging service—

(1) shall not subsidize its telemessaging service directly or indirectly from its telephone exchange service or its exchange access; and

(2) shall not prefer or discriminate in favor of its telemessaging service operations in its provision of telecommunications services.

**(b) Expedited consideration of complaints**

The Commission shall establish procedures for the receipt and review of complaints concerning violations of subsection (a) of this section or the regulations thereunder that result in material financial harm to a provider of telemessaging service. Such procedures shall ensure that the Commission will make a final determination with respect to any such complaint within 120 days after receipt of the complaint. If the complaint contains an appropriate showing that the alleged violation occurred, the Commission shall, within 60 days after receipt of the complaint, order the local exchange carrier and any affiliates to cease engaging in such violation pending such final determination.

**(c) "Telemessaging service" defined**

As used in this section, the term "telemessaging service" means voice mail and voice storage and retrieval services, any live operator services used to record, transcribe, or relay messages (other than telecommunications relay services), and any ancillary services offered in combination with these services.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §260, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 79.)

**§ 261. Effect on other requirements**

**(a) Commission regulations**

Nothing in this part shall be construed to prohibit the Commission from enforcing regulations prescribed prior to February 8, 1996, in fulfilling the requirements of this part, to the extent that such regulations are not inconsistent with the provisions of this part.

**(b) Existing State regulations**

Nothing in this part shall be construed to prohibit any State commission from enforcing regulations prescribed prior to February 8, 1996, or from prescribing regulations after February 8, 1996, in fulfilling the requirements of this part, if such regulations are not inconsistent with the provisions of this part.

**(c) Additional State requirements**

Nothing in this part precludes a State from imposing requirements on a telecommunications carrier for intrastate services that are necessary to further competition in the provision of telephone exchange service or exchange access, as long as the State's requirements are not inconsistent with this part or the Commission's regulations to implement this part.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §261, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 79.)

PART III—SPECIAL PROVISIONS CONCERNING  
BELL OPERATING COMPANIES

**§ 271. Bell operating company entry into interLATA services**

**(a) General limitation**

Neither a Bell operating company, nor any affiliate of a Bell operating company, may provide interLATA services except as provided in this section.

**(b) InterLATA services to which this section applies**

**(1) In-region services**

A Bell operating company, or any affiliate of that Bell operating company, may provide interLATA services originating in any of its in-region States (as defined in subsection (i) of this section) if the Commission approves the application of such company for such State under subsection (d)(3) of this section.

**(2) Out-of-region services**

A Bell operating company, or any affiliate of that Bell operating company, may provide interLATA services originating outside its in-region States after February 8, 1996, subject to subsection (j) of this section.