

**PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, PA 17120**

**Joint Petition of Verizon Pennsylvania LLC
And Verizon North LLC for Competitive
Classification of all Retail Services in
Certain Geographic Areas and for a
Waiver of Regulations for Competitive Services**

**Public Meeting-February 26, 2015
2446303-OSA
Docket Nos. P-2014-2446303 and
P-2014-2446304**

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER PAMELA A. WITMER

Before us today for consideration is the certified record in the above proceeding in which Verizon Pennsylvania LLC (Verizon PA) and Verizon North LLC (Verizon North) are seeking to declare basic local exchange service competitive in certain wire centers located in various areas of Pennsylvania. In addition, Verizon PA and Verizon North request that the Commission waive certain regulations in the same wire centers included in their filing. The Companies filed the Joint Petitions on October 6, 2014, in accordance with the provisions of Section 3016(a) of the Public Utility Code (Code). Various parties protested the Joint Petitions and a hearing was held in December 2014. In accordance with the provisions set forth in Section 3016(a) of the Code, the Commission must enter an order granting or denying the Joint Petitions within 150 days of the filing date.

I support the action that the Commission is taking today to designate basic local exchange service as competitive in certain wire centers throughout Pennsylvania. It is no secret that I have been a strong proponent of competition and furthering competitive markets in our Commonwealth. Consistent with that position, I have strongly supported retail market competition in the electric, natural gas and transportation sectors. It is clear from the record evidence in this proceeding that there are competitive technologies available today that consumers have willingly adopted to meet their various communications needs. The pervasive, expanding and innovative use of technology has revolutionized the way our society communicates and how we use and view traditional landline service.

At the same time that I am a strong proponent of competition, I have also consistently advocated for consumer education and protections in competitive markets. In my review of the record, as well as previous legislation addressing competitive classification of certain telecommunications services offered by Pennsylvania's incumbent local exchange carriers, I have continuously advocated for an appropriate level of consumer protections. I support this action today because it maintains our statutory obligation under Section 1501 of the Code, which requires the Commission to ensure the maintenance of safe and adequate service without unreasonable interruptions or delays. In doing so, our action today continues to provide a forum for Pennsylvania consumers to file complaints before us on quality of service issues, should they arise.

As markets and technology evolved and new and different business plans have come into existence in the various utility markets, I have a record of strongly advocating for, and firmly believe that, the Commission should examine our current regulations to reflect ever-changing conditions and markets. As we have stated during proceedings involving other industries, it is appropriate for the Commission to periodically review its regulations to determine whether or not they have kept pace with current industry standards and practices. Telecommunications is no different. Our action today provides an examination and waiver of certain regulations in the wire centers declared competitive in this proceeding however, our obligations do not end with this proceeding. We must continue our review and revision of our telephone regulations to ensure that our regulatory structure accurately reflects the changing competitive telecommunications market.

The Commission has struck a good balance between removing impediments to competition and technological advances while maintaining important consumer protections. With that however, I am also ready to work with the General Assembly should the legislative branch determine that further action is necessary.

DATE: February 26, 2015


PAMELA A. WITMER
COMMISSIONER