

## **Advocacy Urges FCC to Address Impact of Number Portability on Small Rural Wireline Carriers**

Responding to comments by small rural wireline telephone carriers, the Office of Advocacy (Advocacy) filed a comment letter on February 4, 2004, addressing the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Wireless-to-Wireline Local Number Portability. A complete copy of Advocacy's comment may be accessed at <http://www.sba.gov/advo/laws/comments/>.

- In the proposed rule, the FCC sought comment on: (1) how to encourage wireless-to-wireline porting where the rate center associated with the wireless number does not match the rate center for the wireline carrier seeking to serve the customer, and (2) whether it should reduce the four business-day interval for porting numbers between wireless-to-wireline carriers. The proposal suggests that the FCC is considering requiring wireless-to-wireline porting when the rate centers do not match and reducing the interval for wireline carrier to port numbers to wireless carriers.
- Porting is the transfer of a telephone number from one carrier to another at a customer's request. Wireline-to-wireless porting is the transfer of a number from a wireline carrier to a wireless carrier, and wireless-to-wireline porting is a transfer in the opposite direction. Rate centers are geographic areas used for billing purposes and for issuing phone numbers. Wireline carriers have numbering resources assigned to specific rate centers that cover small geographic areas, while wireless carriers serve customers from rate centers covering wider geographic areas. The rate centers for wireless and wireline carriers do not always match.
- Advocacy raised concerns that the vagueness of the proposal and the initial regulatory flexibility analysis (IRFA) did not satisfy the requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (RFA). Advocacy agreed with small rural wireline carriers that the changes suggested by the FCC's proposal would impose significant economic burdens on small wireline carriers.
- Advocacy recommended that the FCC convert their "Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking" to a "Notice of Inquiry" and not proceed on issues presented in the proposal until the FCC can publish for comment a proposed rule with specific regulatory requirements and a meaningful IRFA with consideration and analysis of significant alternatives that minimize the economic impact.
- The RFA and Executive Order (EO) 13272 require government agencies to analyze their impact thoroughly on small entities and consider less burdensome alternatives. Advocacy's comment was triggered by the FCC's failure to meet the requirements of the RFA and EO 13272.

For more information, visit Advocacy's web page at [www.sba.gov/advo](http://www.sba.gov/advo) or contact Eric Menge at (202) 205-6533.