

Federal Communications Commission 445 12th Street, S.W. Washington, D. C. 20554

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FEDERAL-STATE JOINT BOARD STAFF RELEASES MONITORING REPORT

Comprehensive Report Tracks Trends Related to Universal Service

Washington, D.C. – The staff of the Federal-State Joint Board on universal service has released its most recent Monitoring Report on Universal Service. This report reflects information on the telephone industry filed with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) through May 2003.

The report released today addresses the various universal service support mechanisms, which amounted to over \$5 billion in 2002. In 2002, disbursements among the four categories of universal service mechanisms were: 57.1% for high-cost support; 29.7% for schools and libraries support; 12.9% for low-income support; and 0.3% for rural health care support. The report presents data in eleven categories:

- 1) **Industry Revenues and Contributions** Total industry revenues for telecommunications services provided to end users in 2002 were about \$232 billion, compared to about \$236 billion in 2001. Revenues for fixed local service providers increased slightly to \$90 billion from \$88 billion, while for wireless service providers they increased to \$77 billion from \$69 billion, and for toll service providers they decreased to \$65 billion from \$79 billion.
- 2) Low-Income Support Total low-income support increased from about \$590 million in 2001 to about \$673 million in 2002.
- 3) **High-Cost Support** In 2002, total high-cost support amounted to nearly \$3.0 billion, an increase from nearly \$2.6 billion in 2001. This increase is primarily due to the implementation of the new interstate common line support mechanism, which began in July 2002.
- 4) Schools and Libraries Support Schools and libraries are making substantial use of their available support, with disbursements remaining at about \$1.6 billion and commitments remaining at about \$2.2 billion for the latest school years.
- 5) Rural Health Care Support The demand for rural health care support has remained at a modest level, with disbursements of about \$16.5 million for the fourth year of the program (July 2001 - June 2002), up from \$10.3 million in the prior year.

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- 6) **Subscribership and Penetration** The percentage of households subscribing to telephone service reached an all-time high average of 95.5% in 2002.
- 7) Rates and Price Indices The price index of overall telephone rates increased 0.43% in 2001 (compared to the general rate of inflation of 1.6% for all goods and services).
- 8) **Network Usage and Growth** Total telephone usage remained relatively stable in 2001. In 2001 there were nearly 5 trillion minutes of use, similar to the previous year.
- 9) **Quality of Service** The data show noticeable differences in the quality of service among carriers. For example, complaints per million residential access lines in 2002 varied from 20 to 324.
- 10) **Infrastructure** Fiber digital carrier terminations continued to exhibit growth (working channels grew from nearly 74 million in 2001 to nearly 79 million in 2002).
- 11) **Revenues, Expenses and Investment** For the larger local exchange carriers in 2002, 42% percent of net income was interstate, 30% of revenues was interstate, and 28% of expenses was interstate.

A monitoring program was established in the mid-1980's, at the recommendation of the Separations Joint Board, to track trends related to universal service and related matters. Since then, Joint Board staffs have prepared Monitoring Reports at least once a year -- a compendium of hundreds of pages of statistical data on subscribership and penetration, loop costs, separations factors, universal service fund payments, etc. The report is unique in that it is the only document that includes information on every incumbent local telephone company in the nation. In 1998 the publication of this report was moved from the Separations Joint Board staff to the Universal Service Joint Board staff. This is the sixth Monitoring Report from the Universal Service Joint Board staff

The full text of this document is available for public inspection and copying during regular business hours at the FCC Reference Information Center, Portals II, 445 12th Street, SW, Room CY-A257, Washington, DC 20554. This document may also be purchased from the Commission's duplicating contractor, Qualex International, Portals II, 445 12th Street, SW, Room CY-B402, Washington, DC 20554, telephone 202-863-2893, facsimile 202-863-2898, or via e-mail at <qualexint@aol.com>. The report may also be downloaded from the FCC-State Link Internet site, which can be reached at <www.fcc.gov/wcb/iatd/stats.html>. It is available in both page image (.pdf) format and in a compressed (.zip) format, which, when unzipped yields text and spreadsheet files.

-FCC-

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CC Docket No. 98-202

UNIVERSAL SERVICE

MONITORING REPORT

CC DOCKET NO. 98-202

2003

(Data Received Through May 2003)

Prepared by Federal and State Staff for the

Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service in

CC Docket No. 96-45

This report is available for reference in the FCC's Reference Information Center, Courtyard Level, 445 12th Street SW, Washington, DC 20554. Call Qualex International at (202) 863-2893 to purchase a copy. The report can also be downloaded from the FCC-State Link Internet site at <www.fcc.gov/wcb/iatd/stats.html>. It is available in print image (pdf) files and compressed (zip) files in word processor (MS Word) and spreadsheet (MS Excel or Lotus 123 .wk4) formats.

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Universal Service Monitoring Report CC Docket No. 98-202 2003

Introduction and Summary

This is the seventh report in a series of reports prepared by federal and state staff members for the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service in CC Docket No. 96-45 (Universal Service Joint Board). This report is based on information available to us as of May 2003. These reports contain information designed to monitor the impact of various universal service support mechanisms, and the methods used to finance them. These mechanisms were adopted by the Federal Communications Commission (Commission), based on recommendations from the Universal Service Joint Board. These reports are part of a monitoring program created by the Commission in 1997 to replace a similar program in CC Docket No. 87-339 that resulted in a series of nineteen *Monitoring Reports*. The current program incorporates most of the information that was collected under the previous program, and also new materials from the reports of the administrator of the universal service support mechanisms, the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). To enhance our monitoring ability, we have created an open docket, which allows data, materials, comments, and studies to be submitted by any interested party at any time.

The monitoring program has proven to be valuable, not only as a report on the effects of the Commission's regulatory policies, but also as a complete census of all incumbent local exchange carriers. Because smaller carriers generally are exempt from most Commission reporting requirements, the *Monitoring Report* incorporates data from several sources, including the National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA) and USAC. USAC collects information from all eligible carriers to administer the universal service support mechanisms. NECA, at the direction of the Commission, collects information in order to administer the access charge pools and also provides information to USAC that is utilized in administering the Universal Service Fund. The *Monitoring Report*, therefore, contains the only available comprehensive data on all incumbent local exchange carriers, containing data on such matters as the number of telephone lines, calling volumes, and certain types of costs.

This report presents data for the eleven subject categories selected for monitoring. The first section provides information on the contributions to the universal service support mechanisms and industry revenues, on which those contributions are based. The next four sections provide information on the various support mechanisms: low-income support; high-cost support; schools

The last report was released on October 9, 2002. *Universal Service Monitoring Report*, CC Docket No. 98-202, October 2002 (Data Received Through April 2002), prepared by the Federal and State Staff for the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service in CC Docket No. 96-45.

In some sections, data received in June have been included.

Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, CC Docket No. 96-45, *Report and Order*, FCC 97-157, para. 869 (released May 8, 1997).

⁴ CC Docket No. 98-202.

and libraries support; and rural health care support. The remaining six sections provide information on matters that might be affected by the support mechanisms: subscribership and penetration; rates and price indices; network usage and growth; quality of service; infrastructure; and revenues, expenses, and investment. The *Monitoring Report* is now published once a year.

The following are highlights of some of the material in this report. Section 1 provides an update on industry revenues and the universal service program requirements and contribution factors. Section 2 includes the latest data on the Lifeline and LinkUp America programs. Section 3 includes the most recent projected payments for all of the high-cost support mechanisms, based on the quarterly reports from USAC. It also includes information from the latest filing by NECA for the high-cost loop fund. Section 4 includes updated data on the schools and libraries support mechanism. Section 5 includes updated data on the rural health care support mechanism. Section 6 includes the most recent Census data on subscribership from the Current Population Survey. It also includes data on telephone penetration by income by state and a discussion of the impact of Lifeline programs on penetration. Section 7 includes updated Consumer Price Index and Producer Price Index data and other updated rate information. Section 8 includes the latest NECA data on access minutes, dial equipment minutes, and separations factors. Section 9 includes updated data on the quality of service from the Commission's Automated Reporting Management Information System (ARMIS) reports. Section 10 includes updated data on infrastructure from the ARMIS reports. Section 11 includes the latest information on revenues, expenses, and investment from the ARMIS reports.

This entire report is available electronically through the FCC-State Link Internet site, which can be reached at <<u>www.fcc.gov/wcb/iatd/stats.html</u>>. It is available in both page image (.pdf) format and in a compressed (.zip) format, which, when unzipped yields word processing and spreadsheet files. In addition, information received well in advance of the next *Monitoring Report* will be made available on an interim basis in separate staff reports or in raw data files (such as most NECA filings used in the *Monitoring Report*) on the FCC-State Link Internet site. In addition, the ARMIS data are available on the ARMIS Internet site, which can be reached at <www.fcc.gov/wcb/armis/db/>.

For ease of public reference, parties submitting materials for this docket should provide a duplicate copy to the FCC's Reference Information Center,⁵ where copies of all materials filed in the docket are available for public reference.

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