News from Senator

BOB DOLE

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DOLE PROPOSES COMPROMISE ON TELEPHONE ACCESS CHARGES

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R-KS), and a bipartisan group of 31 other Senators today filed a public letter with the Federal Communications Commission calling on the FCC to reduce the impact of changes in the telephone industry on residential and small business customers, particularly those in rural areas of the country.

"After a lengthy recess and extensive contact with our constituents on this issue, my colleagues and I have filed a letter with the Commission expressing the views of our constituents on appropriate modifications to the access charge order. Our letter recommends that the Commission impose a moratorium during 1984 on end user access charges to reconsider the order in light of the results of divestiture," said Dole.

"We further suggest that if, after additional review it is concluded that access charges should be ordered sometime during this decade, they be capped at a maximum of four dollars and that small rural companies be exempt from the order due to the high costs of those operations. Finally, we have suggested a compromise on the issue of changes in the method by which Other Common Carriers (MCI, GTE-Sprint, etc.) compensate local telephone companies. The compromise would charge the OCC's for actual minutes used but without a substantial reduction in the current discount," Dole said.

"We are committed to doing everything possible to insure that affordable telephone service remains available to everyone. We believe that the four changes we have recommended can preserve universal service. In particular, for rural areas where costs are high, we are seeking substantial changes which would prevent rates from skyrocketing," said Dole. "The cap we propose and the exemption for small rural companies provide far more protection for rural consumers at the end of the moratorium than the legislation pending in the Senate."

"In addition, if the Commission should choose to modify their order in this manner we would have the advantage of certainty in knowing that there would be no new charges this year. Thirty-two Senators, and there are many others who agree with our approach, believe that this is a reasonable compromise. It would eliminate the immediately perceived threat to universal service. But, it would preserve flexibility in the long run to respond to the rapidly changing telecommunications industry. I do not believe the threat to residential telephone rates posed by large user by-pass can be ignored. If we truly want to preserve universal service we must be able to meet that challenge," said Dole.

(MORE)

The letter was signed by the following Senators: Bob Dole
(R-KS), Charles Percy (R-IL), John H. Chafee (R-RI), Pete
V. Domenici (R-NM), Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-NY), Orrin G. Hatch
(R-VT), Jake Garn (R-UT), Mark O. Hatfield (R-OR), John Tower
(R-TX), Bill Bradley (D-NJ), Dan Quayle (R-IN), Jesse Helms
(R-NC), Alan J. Dixon (D-IL), Jeremiah Denton (R-AL), Lloyd
Bentsen (D-TX), Steven D. Symms (R-ID), Paul Laxalt (R-NV), Chic
Hecht (R-NV), David Boren (D-OK), James Abdnor (R-SD), John
P. East (R-NC), Lowell Weicker, Jr. (R-CT), Mack Mattingly
(R-GA), Paul Trible (R-VA), James A. McClure (R-ID), Sam Nunn
(D-GA), Don Nickles (R-OK), Pete Wilson (R-CA), William
L. Armstrong (R-CO), Barry Goldwater (R-AZ), Russell Long (D-LA),
John Warner (R-VA).

-30-