



NEWS

**Federal Communications Commission
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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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FCC PROPOSES TO UNLEASH CONSUMER BENEFITS OF ONLINE VOICE SERVICES BY PROVIDING DIRECT ACCESS TO NUMBERS

Seeking Comment On Costs and Benefits, Including Ensuring Protection of Consumers, Public Safety, Network Reliability and Numbering System

Washington, D.C. – Working to speed innovation and competition in communications services, the Federal Communications Commission today proposed to streamline access to telephone numbers for innovative online providers of phone service.

The proposals continue the ongoing agency-wide effort to modernize its rules for today's broadband marketplace, while promoting competition, protecting consumers and ensuring public safety.

Today, providers of interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol services – a popular type of VoIP service which can place calls to and receive calls from the traditional phone network as well as over the Internet – must obtain numbers through traditional telephone companies acting as a middleman. This can raise costs and slow introduction of innovative services, such as high-definition voice.

To determine whether a more streamlined approach is appropriate in the Internet era, the FCC is seeking comment on whether interconnected VoIP providers should have direct access to numbers. In addition, the FCC is seeking comment on easing access for other services that require numbers, such as IP access to emergency services, home security systems, text messaging services, programmable appliances and telematics like hands-free cellular modems in automobiles.

To test a number of technical issues related to the proposals, FCC also launched a limited, six-month trial of direct access to numbers. Vonage and other VoIP providers with pending direct-access waiver petitions at the Commission will be allowed to test direct access for 5% or fewer of the numbers they currently access through intermediaries – phased in over 6 months – and a very limited amount of new numbers. Participants will be required to report monthly on the progress of the trial, and can be required to return the numbers if problems arise. In addition, the FCC granted a limited waiver to TeleCommunication Systems, Inc., which provides access to E911 services for interconnected VoIP providers.

Looking further ahead, the FCC opened a Notice of Inquiry asking about the long-term relationship of numbers to geographic boundaries. The tie between area codes and geographic regions has been weakened by number portability, especially as mobile subscribers move away from the area where they obtained the service but continue using the number. The Inquiry seeks general comment on these trends and whether changes in Commission policies are appropriate.

Action by the Commission April 18, 2013, by Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Notice of Inquiry (FCC 13-51). Chairman Genachowski, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel and Pai. Separate statements issued by Chairman Genachowski, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel and Pai. Commissioner McDowell not participating.

Docket No.: 13-97

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