



IDAHO ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, INC.
The Voice for Real Estate™ in Idaho

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IDAHO PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Idaho Public Utilities Commission
472 W. Washington St.
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0074

RE: Docket OWE-T-02-25

Dear Commissioners:

The Idaho Association of REALTORS® is an organization of real estate professionals representing nearly 5,000 members statewide. We understand that the Commission is currently considering an application from Qwest for price deregulation of its local telephone service in some Idaho communities. Qwest's application is based on the premise that cell phones provide effective competition for land lines and, therefore, government regulation of pricing is no longer necessary.

The Idaho Association of REALTORS® supports efforts to expand the competitive markets for telecommunication services. As a large consumer of telecommunication services, REALTORS® believe that more competition for local, long distance, Internet and wireless providers will ultimately lead to lower costs and better service for consumers. Therefore, the Idaho Association of REALTORS® supports the proposal.

From the perspective of our members as consumers, they are small business men and women who rely heavily on cell phone technology to conduct their business. We have witnessed a substantial improvement in the quality, availability and pricing of cell phone service in the past few years. It is an integral part of our members' business operations. Cell phones provide the equivalent of land-line service at a competitive price with the significant added value and benefit of mobility.

In terms of our clients, REALTORS® have witnessed two trends. First, not all home buyers incorporate a land-line telephone service in their home. Cell phones have become a substitute for that service. Second, a growing number of consumers are asking for "broadband" services and factoring availability into their purchase decision. Cable modem service is one option; the other is DSL. We understand that Qwest has committed to provide DSL in ten additional communities if you approve their application in this case. We support efforts to expand broadband capability throughout the state.

Our third reason for supporting this application is economic development. Please consider the positive impact on the Idaho economy of Qwest's commitment to invest in DSL. Many homeowners, businesses and communities see broadband as a critical part of their economic well-being. Anything that fosters investment in broadband will help enlarge Idaho's employment opportunities by encouraging development and innovation.

REALTORS® understand the suffocating impact of unnecessary regulation on business. Allowing markets to compete on a level playing field leads to efficiency and competitiveness that ultimately benefits consumer. Allowing land lines to effectively compete with unregulated wireless services means Qwest should have the flexibility to respond to market demands without regulatory oversight that slows their responsiveness and skews the market for local service in favor of an unregulated telecommunications option.

Qwest's proposal seems to be a logical next step in the evolution of telecommunication regulation. We believe the proposal strikes a reasonable balance between consumer protection and the public policy goal of creating an environment that promotes innovation and investment. We encourage your approval of the proposal.

Sincerely,

Peggy Sawicki
Peggy Sawicki
President

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