

STATE OF IOWA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
UTILITIES BOARD

<p>IN RE:</p> <p>OFFICE OF CONSUMER ADVOCATE,</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">Complainant,</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">vs.</p> <p>MCI, INC.,</p> <p style="padding-left: 100px;">Respondent.</p>	<p style="text-align:center">DOCKET NO. FCU-05-65</p>
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PROCEDURAL ORDER AND NOTICE OF HEARING

(Issued January 19, 2006)

On September 19, 2005, Mrs. Alice Steele filed a complaint with the Utilities Board (Board) against MCI, Inc. (MCI), alleging that her son had switched her telephone service from MCI to Qwest Corporation (Qwest) effective July 15, 2005; that without approval, MCI switched her service back on August 7, 2005; that her son tried to contact MCI without success; and that MCI billed her for service when Qwest was her provider. Board staff investigated the complaint and forwarded it to MCI for response. MCI did not provide a response other than an email that said it would respond by the close of business on October 19, 2005.

On October 21, 2005, Board staff issued a proposed resolution finding by default that MCI was in violation of the Board's slamming rules and directing MCI to fully credit all charges and close the account. After the proposed resolution was

issued, in a letter to Mrs. Steele's son dated October 26, 2005, MCI stated it received notification and processed an order to discontinue local service with MCI on August 19, 2005. In the letter, MCI stated its records did not show any notification prior to that date, that it cancelled the account as of August 29, 2005, and that it issued a refund check of \$36.83 to Mrs. Steele.

The Consumer Advocate Division of the Department of Justice (Consumer Advocate) filed a petition for a proceeding to consider a civil penalty on November 4, 2005. The details of the informal complaint case are contained in informal complaint file number C-05-187, which is incorporated into the record in this case pursuant to 199 IAC 6.7. MCI filed a response to and motion to dismiss the Consumer Advocate's petition on November 28, 2005. The Consumer Advocate filed a reply memorandum on December 6, 2005.

On December 20, 2005, the Board issued an order finding that reasonable grounds exist for further investigation of the case, granting the Consumer Advocate's petition, docketing the case for formal proceeding, and assigning it to the undersigned administrative law judge.

Pursuant to the Board's order and Iowa Code §§ 476.3(1) and 476.103(4), and 199 IAC 6.5, a procedural schedule will be established and a hearing date set.

The statutes and rules involved in this case include Iowa Code §§ 476.3 and 476.103 and Board rules at 199 IAC 1.8, 1.9, 22.23, and chapters 6 and 7. Links to the Iowa Code and the Board's administrative rules (in the Iowa Administrative Code

(IAC)) are contained on the Board's Web site at www.state.ia.us/iub. The parties should be aware that the Board recently amended its procedural rules in rule 1.8 and chapter 7, and the amended rules became effective December 14, 2005. All rule references in this order are to the amended procedural rules.

THE ISSUES

The issues in this case generally involve the change of Mrs. Steele's telephone service and MCI's billing of Mrs. Steele for service, whether MCI complied with applicable law, whether imposition of a civil penalty is appropriate, and the factors regarding the amount of civil penalty in Iowa Code §476.103(4)(b). The parties may raise other issues prior to and during the hearing.

PREPARED TESTIMONY AND EXHIBITS

All parties will have the opportunity to present and respond to evidence and make argument on all issues involved in this proceeding. Parties may choose to be represented by counsel at their own expense. Iowa Code § 17A.12(4). The proposed decision that will be issued in this case must be based on evidence contained in the record and on matters officially noticed. Iowa Code §§ 17A.12(6) and 17A.12(8).

The submission of prepared evidence prior to hearing helps identify disputed issues of fact to be addressed at the hearing. Prepared testimony contains all statements that a witness intends to give under oath at the hearing, set forth in

question and answer form. When a witness who has submitted prepared testimony takes the stand, the witness does not ordinarily repeat the written testimony or give a substantial amount of new testimony. Instead, the witness is cross-examined concerning the statements already made in writing. The use of prepared testimony and submission of documentary evidence ahead of the hearing prevents surprise at the hearing and helps each party to prepare adequately so a full and true disclosure of the facts can be obtained. Iowa Code §§ 17A.14(1) and (3); 199 IAC 7.10.

PARTY STATUS AND COMMUNICATION WITH THE BOARD

The Consumer Advocate and MCI are currently the only parties to this proceeding. If Mrs. Steele wishes to become a party to this case, she must notify the Board in writing in accordance with the procedural schedule established in this order.

MCI filed the information required to be included in an appearance with its response to the petition. Therefore, MCI has fulfilled the requirements of 199 IAC 7.4(7).

Any party who communicates with the Board should send an original and ten copies of the communication to the Executive Secretary at the address above, accompanied by a certificate of service. One copy of the communication should also be sent at the same time to each of the other parties to this proceeding, except that three copies must be served on the Consumer Advocate. 199 IAC 7.4(6)"c." These requirements apply, for example, to the filing of prepared testimony and exhibits with the Board.

These procedures are necessary to comply with Iowa Code § 17A.17 and 199 IAC 7.22, which prohibit ex parte communication. Ex parte communication is when one party in a contested case communicates with the judge without the other parties being given the opportunity to be present. In order to be prohibited, the communication must be about the facts or law in the case. Calls to the Board to ask about procedure or the status of the case are not ex parte communication. Ex parte communication may be oral or written. This means the parties in this case may not communicate about the facts or law in this case with the undersigned administrative law judge unless the other parties are given the opportunity to be present, or unless the other parties are provided with a copy of the written documents filed with the Board.

Pursuant to 199 IAC 6.7, the written complaint and all supplemental information from the informal complaint proceeding, identified as informal complaint file C-05-187, are part of the record of this formal complaint proceeding.

The materials that have been filed in this docket are available for inspection at the Board Records and Information Center, 350 Maple Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. Copies may be obtained by calling the Records and Information Center at (515) 281-5563. There will be a charge to cover the cost of the copying. Board orders are available on the Board's Web site at www.state.ia.us/iub.

All parties should examine Iowa Code §§ 476.3, 476.103, and Board rules at 199 IAC 1.8 and 22.23, and chapters 6 and 7, for substantive and procedural rules that apply to this case.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED:

1. If Mrs. Steele wishes to become a party to this case, she must file written notice with the Board no later than February 9, 2006.

2. On or before February 9, 2006, the Consumer Advocate and any intervenors must file prepared direct testimony and exhibits and a prehearing brief. The prepared direct testimony may refer to any document already in the record, and parties do not need to refile exhibits already submitted in the informal complaint process and made a part of the record. In prepared testimony and exhibits, the Consumer Advocate must address the issues discussed above, support each of the allegations made in its petition and reply, and file any other evidence not previously filed. The Consumer Advocate should use exhibit numbers one and following. In its prehearing brief, the Consumer Advocate must explain why it believes imposition of a civil penalty would be appropriate and in accordance with applicable law in this particular case. If Mrs. Steele becomes a party to this case and wishes to file prepared testimony and a brief, she must do so on or before February 9, 2006.

3. On or before March 2, 2006, MCI must file prepared testimony and exhibits and a prehearing brief. MCI may refer to any document in the record, and does not need to refile exhibits already submitted in the informal complaint process

and made a part of the record. In its prepared testimony and exhibits, MCI must address the issues discussed above, support each of the allegations made in its response, and file any other evidence not previously filed. MCI should use exhibit numbers 100 and following. In its prehearing brief, MCI must explain why it believes imposition of a civil penalty would not be appropriate and would not be in accordance with applicable law in this particular case.

4. If any party wishes to have a witness connected to the hearing by telephone conference call, the party must file written notification with the Board no later than March 16, 2006.

5. If the Consumer Advocate or any intervenor is going to file prepared rebuttal testimony and exhibits or a rebuttal brief, it must do so on or before March 23, 2006.

6. A hearing for the presentation of evidence and the cross-examination of witnesses will be held in Board Conference Room 3, 350 Maple Street, Des Moines, Iowa, on Thursday, March 30, 2006, commencing at 9:30 a.m. Each party must provide a copy of its prepared testimony and exhibits to the court reporter. Persons with disabilities requiring assistive services or devices to observe or participate should contact the Board at 1-515-281-5256 no later than five business days prior to the hearing to request that appropriate arrangements be made.

7. In the absence of objection, all data requests and responses referred to in oral testimony or on cross-examination will become part of the evidentiary record

of these proceedings. Pursuant to 199 IAC 7.23(4)"d," the party making reference to the data request must file one original and three copies of the data request and response with the Executive Secretary of the Board at the earliest possible time.

8. Any person not currently a party who wishes to intervene in this case must meet the requirements for intervention in 199 IAC 7.13. The person must file a petition to intervene on or before 20 days following the date of issuance of this order, unless the petitioner has good cause for the late intervention. 199 IAC 7.13(1).

UTILITIES BOARD

/s/ Amy L. Christensen
Amy L. Christensen
Administrative Law Judge

ATTEST:

/s/ Judi K. Cooper
Executive Secretary

Dated at Des Moines, Iowa, this 19th day of January, 2006.