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Commissioner Tony Clark

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**Efficient Portability Process Will Enhance Competition, Commissioner Tony Clark
Tells Congress**

WASHINGTON — Establishing an efficient telephone number portability process will enhance competition in the telecommunications industry and help state regulators prevent against the exhaustion of area codes, Commissioner Tony Clark told a Senate Committee today.

In testimony before the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, Clark, who is also chairman of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners' Committee on Telecommunications, said that states have long supported number portability as a means to foster lower local telephone prices and stimulate demand for telecommunications services, and have supported the Federal Communications Commission's initial efforts to address this issue.

"NARUC has urged the FCC to immediately act to prohibit onerous and non-standard porting practices as anti-competitive and anti-consumer," Clark said.

Clark cited recent allegations raised at the FCC in which some local telephone exchange companies, or local exchange carriers (LECs), have adopted practices that complicate and delay the process of switching — or "porting out" — a customer's phone number to a new provider or service. This acts as a barrier to true competition, Clark said.

In particular, competitive providers claim that some LECs insist on old and cumbersome procedures that make switching between wireline and wireless companies and services a frustrating task, Clark said.

"If these allegations are true, they certainly support their argument that some LECs are imposing onerous and burdensome porting requirements simply to slow their churn rates by rendering the porting process complicated and time-consuming," Clark said.

Noting that NARUC passed a resolution in February 2007 on this issue, Clark said that the FCC and Congress should act quickly to resolve this issue. "The statistics on porting cited in these allegations suggest that both the Commission's and Congress' primary purpose in establishing portability obligations is being frustrated," Clark said. "Something must be causing almost a third of customers to cancel their wireline-to-wireless ports."

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