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PSC POSTPONES HEARING ON US WEST'S REQUEST  
TO ENTER EXPANDED LONG-DISTANCE MARKET

The Montana Public Service Commission decided Friday to postpone until late this year its hearing on US West Communication's request for a favorable recommendation from the PSC to the Federal Communications Commission when the company applies for permission to provide additional long-distance service in Montana. A definite hearing date will be set after discussions with parties to the case.

Postponement of the hearing will give parties to the case time to use the discovery process to develop issues raised by new evidence submitted by US West in its latest round of testimony. The new evidence includes changes made by US West to its electronic gateways to the operational support systems that allow competing local carriers to access necessary ordering, repair and billing functions and improved performance indicators to measure whether US West provides competing carriers with various services on a nondiscriminatory basis.

US West consented to delaying the hearing for up to 90 days to allow for additional discovery in documents filed yesterday with the PSC.

The hearing had been scheduled to begin next week, but several parties, including the Montana Consumer Counsel and long-distance companies AT&T, Sprint, MCI, Eclipse, Skyland Technologies and Touch America, asked the PSC to summarily reject US West's filing because they contended the evidence provided by US West in the proceeding fails, on its face, to meet the requirements of Section 271 of the federal Telecommunications Act. The PSC denied the request to reject the filing.

The PSC also directed US West to file monthly updates of its progress on performance measurements and on its interfaces with operational support systems. In addition, US West must submit as part of this proceeding all evidence it intends to file with the FCC when the company makes its filing there.

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