

CORPORATION COMMISSION SEEKS INPUT ON TELEPHONE SERVICES AND COMPETITION

From Okla. Corporation Commission

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) The Oklahoma Corporation Commission issued two notices of inquiry this week relating to telephone service in Oklahoma. PUD960000305 seeks comments on services offered by local-exchange telephone companies and PUD960000306 seeks to generate ideas and options for local-exchange competition in areas that may not be profitable.

Copies of the notices of inquiry explaining the comment procedure are available at no cost in the office of the Commission Clerk. The notices (PUD960000305 and PUD960000306) will be posted this week on the commission's electronic bulletin board (405-522-2622) and on the Internet at <http://www.occ.state.ok.us>.

For PUD960000305, the Commission is asking for comments on whether local-exchange telephone companies should be required to expedite the offering of advanced-technology custom-calling services such as caller ID, call tracing and automatic callback. These are optional features that customers may buy as additions to basic telephone service.

The notice of inquiry invites comment on what custom-calling features should be offered, whether the Corporation Commission has the authority to require statewide availability of such features, and how telephone companies might recover the cost of new investment required to provide the custom-calling features.

The notice also invites comment on whether requiring uniformity of custom-calling features is in the public interest and what effect such a requirement might have on local-exchange competition.

Comments in response to this notice of inquiry will be accepted through October 22.

A conference to discuss comments received will be held at 9:30 a.m., Oct. 24, in Room 301 of the Jim Thorpe Bldg. Reply comments will be accepted through Nov. 5.

Based on information gathered through this notice of inquiry, the commission will decide whether to consider requiring statewide uniformity of advanced-technology custom-calling services.

BOOSTING LOCAL PHONE COMPETITION

Notice PUD960000306 seeks to generate ideas and identify options to encourage local-exchange telephone competition in areas that competitive service providers may

not consider profitable.

"In areas where telecommunications service providers do not believe sufficient revenues will be generated, competitive local-exchange providers, unless otherwise encouraged, are less likely to offer service, or will offer service only after profitable locations have been supplied," the notice says.

Four companies have been certified by the Corporation Commission as of Oct. 9 to compete for local-exchange customers. All newly certified carriers indicated they intend to compete only in territories served by Southwestern Bell and GTE Southwest, companies serving all of Oklahoma's largest cities.

Suggestions from the public, local gov-

erning bodies and private industry are solicited as to what incentives might attract competitive service to possibly non-profitable areas. Comments on the possibility of providing subsidies are also encouraged.

Comments in response to this notice of inquiry will be accepted through October 25.

A conference to discuss comments received will be held at 10 a.m., Nov. 7, in Room 301 of the Jim Thorpe Bldg. Reply comments will be accepted through Nov. 14.

Based on information gathered through this notice of inquiry, the commission will decide whether to consider changing the rules to encourage local-exchange telephone competition statewide.

GENERAL REVENUE RECEIPTS SHOW GAINS FOR MONTH, QUARTER

From Office of State Finance

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) Led by gains in income, sales and gross production taxes, Oklahoma's General Revenue collections exceeded those of the prior year and estimate for both the month of September and the first quarter of the fiscal year, the Office of State Finance reported Tuesday.

Receipts totaled \$352.4 million for the month and \$908.5 million for the first quarter for the period ending September 30.

The three-month first quarter total was up \$67.8 million or 8.1 percent from a year ago and was \$41.7 million or 4.8 percent above the estimate. Under the estimate, the first quarter had been expected to show a gain of 3.1 percent above the prior year.

Receipts from each of the four major taxes topped both the prior year and estimate for the quarter. Income, sales and gross production taxes exceeded both the prior year and estimate for the month. Motor vehicle receipts, representing vehicle sales and licenses, exceeded the prior year but trailed the estimate by 2.4 percent for the month.

The estimate is based on historical collection patterns for the month and year to date as applied to the State Board of Equalization's certified estimate for the 1996 fiscal year.

Of the total General Revenue September receipts of \$352.4 million, \$289.3 million will go for October allocations to state agencies to satisfy appropriations. The remaining \$63.1 million will be carried forward for future months. This plus \$139.8 million in the General Revenue Cash-Flow Reserve Fund will leave a cash-flow balance of \$202.9 million for use as needed in future months.

General Revenue Fund receipts histori-

cally exceed allocation requirements in September, when collections are bolstered by quarterly filing of individual and corporate income tax estimates. Collections normally fall below monthly needs in October and November, requiring draws on cash-flow funds before rebounding in December and January.

The Finance Office listed the following comparisons between current revenue, the prior year figures and estimates for the four major General Revenue Fund sources:

- **Income Tax** — This source produced \$180.1 million in September and \$390.3 million for the first three months. The September total was up \$12.9 million or 7.7 percent from a year ago and was \$9.0 million or 5.3 percent above the estimate. Receipts for the first quarter were up \$29.2 million or 8.1 percent from a year ago and were \$18.7 million or 5.0 percent above the estimate. In other first quarter comparisons with a year ago, income tax withholding receipts were up 8.0 percent, and estimated payments from individuals gained 11.4 percent, while estimated payments from corporations showed a decrease of 21.8 percent.

For the first quarter, individual income tax net receipts produced \$352.7 million, which was \$29.2 million or 9.0 percent above a year ago and \$17.1 million or 5.1 percent above the estimate. Corporate receipts yielded \$37.6 million the first three months, which was unchanged from a year ago and \$1.6 million or 4.6 percent above the estimate. Individual refunds showed a decrease of 9.0 percent and corporate refunds a decline of 35 percent when compared

See *General Revenue*, page 5