

TWO COMPANIES APPROVED FOR LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE

By Michelle Boyd Waters
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The Oklahoma Corporation Commission has approved the applications of Western Oklahoma Long Distance Inc., Clinton, and U.S. Long Distance Inc., San Antonio, Texas, to provide local-exchange telephone service in Oklahoma.

They are the sixth and seventh companies approved to compete for local-exchange customers since the Corporation Commission adopted Oklahoma local competition

rules in March.

"We don't know how this will affect anyone," said Patrick Petree, public information officer for the commission.

Petree said the competitors will have to buy certain services from Southwestern Bell — such as phone lines and having their customers names in phone book — and resell them.

The public information officer also said that AT&T, one of the companies already approved to sell local service, is going

through arbitration and the commission will consider its case later in November.

Application information filed with the Corporation Commission indicates Western Oklahoma Long Distance has been a reseller of long-distance services in Oklahoma since 1988.

The five companies approved earlier to compete for local-service telephone customers are AT&T Communications of the Southwest, two Oklahoma subsidiaries of Brooks Fiber Properties, St. Louis; Spring Communications, Kansas City; Dobson Wireless, Oklahoma City; and Chickasaw Telecommunications, Sulphur.

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we do business," Warner said. According to a survey of voter opinions conducted by Oklahoma 2000, voters were entrenched in their attitudes in favor of increased services, but against increased government revenue. However, the survey showed that people were more favorable for local governments to provide services and collect taxes than for state government to do those things.

The study also looks at the conflicting pressures between Oklahomans' desire for services and their emphasis on lower taxes. For the future, the study projects that events will undoubtedly heighten the fundamental tension between these two polar desires.

Warner said that if Oklahomans want to maintain the current level of services, they will have to accept some changes.

By identifying and tracking revenue enhancing actions of state government since the passage of SQ 640, the study identifies wide-range methods to increase funding for state projects that would skirt the constitutional requirements of SQ 640.

This indicates that state officials have already adapted to SQ 640 in ways that maintain the level of government spending.

"Oklahomans will have to be more willing to accept user fees if they want to pay less taxes," Warner said.

Areas that may see increases in fees may include higher education, medical services and parks and recreation.

The Oklahoma state government may turn to public enterprise activities such as a lottery to raise revenue. They may also turn over some governmental responsibilities to other organizations, such as giving responsibility for state highways to the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority.

Oklahoma may experience an increase in privatization of services. Some current issues include the privatization of state pris-

ons and education vouchers.

The state government may also continue to reduce the number of government employees and also reduce services.

The authors state that a reduction in services will most likely be a last line of defense if it becomes difficult to fund existing programs.

Shrinking revenue may also cause the state to shift the cost of running the government on to government employees and on to local governments. For example, one issue involves the state ceasing to fund county road repairs.

An important question raised in the study is whether SQ 640 has created the conditions for a structural or long-term deficit and whether this is insufficient to maintain the existing level of services.

Although revenues will grow with economic expansion, the rigidity of the present tax structure is a further limiting factor. From a review of the tax structure and the changing program emphasis in Oklahoma, the study finds that it is most likely that revenues will grow less rapidly than both the overall economy and expenditure needs, according to the study.

The textbook format publication is sale from Oklahoma 2000, Inc. Authors of this study include Drs. Donald A. Murray and Alexander Holmes, professors of economics at the University of Oklahoma; Drs. Kent W. Olson and Larkin Warner, professors of economics at Oklahoma State University; Dr. Robert C. Dauffenbach, director of the Center for Economic and Management Research, University of Oklahoma; and Dr. Mary Gade, associate professor of economics, Oklahoma State University.

Oklahoma 2000, Inc. is the research affiliate of The State Chamber, Oklahoma's association of business and industry.

THE DIABETES THREAT TO OKLAHOMA

From Oklahoma Dept. of Health

■(OKLAHOMA CITY) In a 1994 report on Oklahoma, it was estimated that 183,000 Oklahomans have diabetes, and only half have been diagnosed. Oklahomans with diabetes face not only a shortened life span but also suffer significant diabetes related complications.

"The 1993 data reflected that 641 deaths were due to diabetes," said J.R. Nida, M.D., commissioner of health, "and the cost of diabetes to Oklahoma was estimated at \$1.2 billion in both medical care (direct) and lost productivity (indirect) costs." Diabetes is a chronic disease that impairs the body's ability to use food properly. Glucose is burned as fuel to supply the body with energy. This process — turning food into energy is called metabolism. But in order to metabolize glucose properly, the body requires another substance: insulin. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas; its job is to regulate the body's use of glucose. Insulin is essential to the metabolic process. Without insulin to turn glucose into energy, the glucose piles up in the bloodstream and spills into the urine showing as "sugar in the urine." High levels of glucose in the blood and the urine are the hallmarks of untreated and uncontrolled diabetes.

"While there is no cure for diabetes as yet, it can be controlled," said Nida. "The main goal of diabetes treatment is to control blood glucose levels and keep them in the target range. The specific kind of treatment used to control blood glucose depends on the type of diabetes a person has."

Type I (insulin dependent) Diabetes oc-

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