



JACK SHREVE
PUBLIC COUNSEL

STATE OF FLORIDA
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC COUNSEL

c/o The Florida Legislature
111 West Madison Street
Room 812
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1400
904-488-9330

ORIGINAL
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July 21, 1992

Steve Tribble, Director
Division of Records and Reporting
Florida Public Service Commission
101 East Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Re: Docket No. 920260-TL

Dear Mr. Tribble:

Enclosed for filing in the above-referenced docket on behalf of the Citizens of the State of Florida are the original and 15 copies of the Citizens' Motion to Impose a Penalty on Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company for Filing and Failing to Correct False Information Submitted to the Commission.

Please indicate the time and date of receipt on the enclosed duplicate of this letter and return it to our office.

Sincerely,

Charles J. Beck
Charles J. Beck
Deputy Public Counsel

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BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Comprehensive Review of the)
Revenue Requirements and Rate) Docket No. 920260-TL
Stabilization Plan of Southern) Filed: July 21, 1992
Bell Telephone & Telegraph Company)
_____)

**CITIZENS' MOTION TO IMPOSE A PENALTY ON SOUTHERN BELL
TELEPHONE AND TELEGRAPH COMPANY FOR FILING AND FAILING
TO CORRECT FALSE INFORMATION SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSION**

Pursuant to section 350.0611, Florida Statutes, the Citizens' of Florida ("Citizens"), by and through Jack Shreve, Public Counsel, move the Florida Public Service Commission ("Commission" or "PSC") to impose a full penalty on BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc., doing business as Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company ("Southern Bell") for filing false information with the Commission, knowingly failing to correct public record information (schedule 11s) previously filed with the Commission, and refusing to disclose public record information.

Background

1. Citizens discovered that Southern Bell had conducted an audit of its PSC schedule 11 reports¹ in the third quarter of

¹ See Fla. Admin. Code R. 25-4.0185 (requiring telecommunications companies to file schedule 11 reports on a quarterly basis).

1991, and had uncovered "significant adverse findings."² Citizens' twenty-sixth set of interrogatories, filed June 3, 1992, targeted this audit. Citizens asked the company to "state every adverse finding discovered in the third quarter 1991 audit of the Florida PSC schedule 11 reports"; to "state every finding on the third quarter 1991 audit of the Florida PSC schedule 11 reports that shows an inconsistency with the schedule 11s on file with the PSC"; and to "state whether you believe, or have reason to believe, that any of the Florida PSC schedule 11 reports you submitted to the PSC have any inaccurate information."

Southern Bell filed its response and objections to the twenty-sixth set of interrogatories on July 8, 1992. Southern Bell admitted that it discovered some inaccurate data in their schedule 11 reports pertaining to data submitted from its North Dade and Gainesville operations in 1990. See Southern Bell's response to the twenty-sixth interrogatory, item 8. Southern Bell claimed that the attorney-client and work product privileges protected the rest of the audit information, which contained "significant adverse findings," from discovery. Citizens filed a motion to compel Southern Bell to answer these questions on July 20, 1992.

2. Citizens requested the production of the 1991 schedule 11 audit in its twenty-fourth production of documents request,

² See Attachment A to Southern Bell's Opposition to Public Counsel's First Motion to Compel and Request for In Camera Inspection of Documents, filed May 15, 1992 in docket no. 920260-TL. The decision on the motion is still pending.

item 9, filed June 3, 1992. On July 8, 1992, Southern Bell withheld this audit under a claim of attorney-client and work product privileges.

Commission Authority to Impose Penalties

3. The Commission has exercised the discretion to impose a penalty on a utility for violation of its rules for decades. See e.g., In re: Central Truck Lines, Inc., 58 PUR 3d 365 (F.P.U.C. 1965). The Commission has the statutory authority to impose a penalty of up to \$5,000 a day for noncompliance with Commission rules under its general powers. § 350.127, Fla. Stat. (1991). Section 350.127(1), Florida Statutes provides:

The commission may impose upon any regulated company that is found to have refused to comply with or willfully violated any lawful rule or order of the commission, or any statute administered by the commission, a penalty for each such offense of not more than \$5,000, to be fixed, imposed, and collected by the commission, or the commission may, for any such violation, amend, suspend, or revoke any certificate issued by the commission. Each day that such refusal or violation continues shall constitute a separate offense. Each penalty shall be a lien upon the real and personal property of the regulated company, enforceable by the commission as a statutory lien upon the real and personal property of the regulated company, enforceable by the commission as a statutory lien under chapter 85. The net proceeds from the enforcement of any such lien shall be deposited in the General Revenue Fund.

Id. The Commission has express authority to impose a penalty of up to \$25,000 a day on any telecommunications company that refuses to comply with or willfully violates its rules. §

364.285, Fla. Stat. Section 364.285(1), Florida Statutes provides:

The commission shall have the power to impose upon any entity subject to its jurisdiction under this chapter which is found to have refused to comply with or to have willfully violated any lawful rule or order of the commission or any provision of this chapter a penalty for each offense of not more than \$25,000, which penalty shall be fixed, imposed, and collected by the commission; or the commission may, for any such violation, amend, suspend, or revoke any certificate issued by it. Each day that such refusal or violation continues constitutes a separate offense. Each penalty shall be a lien upon the real and personal property of the entity, enforceable by the commission as a statutory lien under chapter 85. Collected penalties shall be deposited in the General Revenue Fund unallocated.

Id. The Commission's imposition of a penalty for willful violation of its rules has been upheld by the Supreme Court of Florida. Commercial Ventures v. Beard, etc., et al., 595 So. 2d 47 (Fla. 1992) (imposing a \$7,000 fine on pay telephone company for willful violation of commission rules).

4. The Commission may require utilities to file regular reports of its service and operation. § 350.117, Fla. Stat. Commission rules require telecommunications companies to maintain a history of customer trouble reports and file a statistical report on that history with the Commission quarterly. Fla. Admin. Code R. 25-4.0185 & 4.022.

5. The Citizens believe that the company's filing of inaccurate information on its schedule 11s, the failure to notify the Commission of those inaccuracies, the refusal to disclose the extent of the inaccuracies, and the company's attempt to delay the correction of those inaccuracies through transparent claims

of attorney-client and work product privileges, warrants the imposition of a penalty dating from January 1, 1990 or earlier if the audit so indicates.

Argument

6. Regulatory reports filed with the Commission are public records. Id. §§ 119.01 & 119.011(1). Schedule 11 reports detailing the customer service quality indicators must be filed with the Commission quarterly. Fla. Admin. Code R. 25-4.0185. Schedule 11s are public record. The company audited the information that is contained in a public record. As the database for the original schedule 11s on file with the Commission and the third quarter audit is the same, the information contained in the audit is a matter of public record. Southern Bell cannot bury this information from public scrutiny by stating that the audit was performed at the request of its attorney in anticipation of litigation. How can the Commission or the Citizens' consumer advocate hope to perform their statutory oversight duties if a utility is allowed to submit inaccurate reports and then hide the facts? No stretch of the definition of privilege would permit such a manifestly unjust result.

7. Knowingly filing a false report with the Commission is a misdemeanor. § 837.06, Fla. Stat. (1991). Since a company has a legal duty to file correct information with the Commission, it has a legal duty to correct inaccurate information on file with the Commission. Each day Southern Bell fails to do so once the

inaccuracies are uncovered is tantamount to willfully filing a false report. By its own admission, the audit discloses inaccuracies in the North Dade and Gainesville data for 1990, as well as other significant adverse findings in the schedule 11s on file with the Commission. If the company is permitted to hide its adverse findings behind a broad claim of privilege, then all the information this company has filed with the Commission will be suspect.

8. Southern Bell has a legal duty to immediately disclose any inaccuracies in reports filed with the Commission. See id. Attempts to cover-up this information and willfully hide it from the Commission and other parties, perpetuates a fraud on the public. See id. No information is privileged that is in furtherance of a crime or fraud. The Commission should order Southern Bell to immediately disclose this information and levy a penalty for each day the company continues in its willful disobedience.

9. On its face, the attorney-client and work product privileges do not apply to this information. See Citizens' motion to compel, Docket No. 910163, filed July 20, 1992. Filing of regulatory reports is not a legal matter; it is a routine business matter. Auditing regulatory reports cannot be made a legal matter by having in-house counsel supervise the process. Clearly, the information contained in the audit is not privileged.

10. Southern Bell's withholding of this data under a claim of privilege is an attempt to delay the fact-finding process of pending cases. Southern Bell has sole control of the customer trouble reporting data base and the computer system by which this data is processed and analyzed. Each day that Southern Bell delays in correcting the records on file with the Commission is a day it refuses to comply with Commission rules.

11. Southern Bell provided, by its own limited response, an admission that at least some of the information contained in the schedule 11s on file with the Commission is inaccurate. What other significant adverse findings has the company uncovered? Unless the Commission compels Southern Bell to respond to Citizens' discovery requests and to correct the inaccuracies in the reports on file at the Commission, Southern Bell's schedule 11s will be suspect.

12. Additionally, Southern Bell's attempt to keep the scope of its false reports secret, calls into question the veracity of all of the companies records filed with the Commission. How can the Commission or the Citizens of this state rely on any information submitted by Southern Bell when it is clear that the company has arrogated to itself the decision of which falsifications it chooses to correct? This contravenes the Legislature's policy of regulating utilities in the public interest. § 364.041(3), Fla. Stat. The Commission can only meet its mandate of ensuring that monopoly services of

telecommunications companies are subject to effective regulation if it ensures the accuracy of the reports filed.

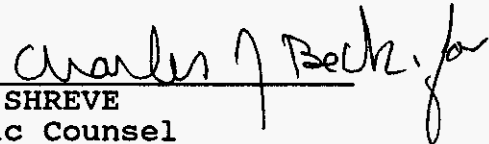
Conclusion

13. Citizens assert that Southern Bell's 1991 third quarter schedule 11 audit, and the information contained therein, is a business document containing public record data, and as such, is not covered by the attorney-client privilege, nor the more limited work product privilege. Southern Bell has no legal justification for withholding this information from Citizens. Indeed, it has a legal duty to immediately rectify the false reports that are on file with the Commission. Its willful failure to do so and intractable claims of privilege justify this Commission in levying a heavy penalty on the company. If Southern Bell is permitted to ignore its legal duty without swift and severe punishment, the message to all other utilities in this state will be a clear clarion call to dupe the customers at-will.

WHEREFORE, Citizens respectfully request this Commission to impose a full penalty on Southern Bell for filing of a false report(s), for each day Southern Bell knowingly fails to correct

the inaccuracies in the report(s), and for willfully withholding public record information.

Respectfully submitted,



JACK SHREVE
Public Counsel
CHARLES J. BECK
Deputy Public Counsel
JANIS SUE RICHARDSON
Associate Public Counsel

Office of Public Counsel
c/o The Florida Legislature
111 West Madison Street
Room 812
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1400

(904) 488-9330

Attorneys for the Citizens
of the State of Florida

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE
DOCKET NO. 920260-TL**

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a copy of the foregoing has been furnished by U.S. Mail or hand-delivery to the following parties on this 21st day of July, 1992.

Marshall Criser, III
BellSouth Telecommunications,
Inc. (Southern Bell Telephone
& Telegraph Company)
150 S. Monroe St., Suite 400
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Harris B. Anthony
BellSouth Telecommunications,
Inc. (Southern Bell Telephone
& Telegraph Company)
150 W. Flagler St., Suite 1910
Miami, FL 33130

Robin Norton
Division of Communications
Fla. Public Service Commission
101 East Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Doug Lackey
BellSouth Telecommunications,
Inc. (Southern Bell Telephone
& Telegraph Company)
4300 Southern Bell Center
Atlanta, GA 30375

Mike Twomey
Department of Legal Affairs
Attorney General
The Capitol Bldg., 16th Floor
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1050

Angela Green
Division of Legal Services
Fla. Public Service Commission
101 East Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Edward Paschall
Florida AARP Capital City Task
Force
1923 Atapha Nene
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Fla. Consumer Action Network
4100 W. Kennedy Blvd., #128
Tampa, FL 33609

Charlotte Brayer
275 John Knox Rd., EE 102
Tallahassee, FL 32303

Richard D. Melson
Hopping, Boyd, Green & Sams
23 South Calhoun Street
P.O. Box 6526
Tallahassee, FL 32314

Michael J. Henry
MCI Telecommunications Corp.
MCI Center
Three Ravinia Drive
Atlanta, GA 30346

Joseph A. McGolthlin
Vicki Gordon Kaufman
McWhirter, Grandoff & Reeves
522 E. Park Ave., Suite 200
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Rick Wright
AFAD
Fla. Public Service Commission
101 East Gaines Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Peter M. Dunbar
Haben, Culpepper, Dunbar
& French, P.A.
306 N. Monroe St.
P.O. Box 10095
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Patrick K. Wiggins
Wiggins & Villacorta, P.A.
P.O. Drawer 1657
Tallahassee, FL 32302

Dan B. Hendrickson
P.O. Box 1201
Tallahassee, FL 32302

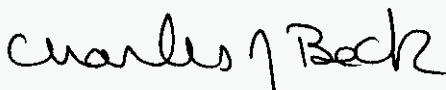
Monte Belote
Florida Consumer Action Network
4100 W. Kennedy Blvd., #128
Tampa, FL 33609

Joseph P. Gillan
J. P. Gillan and Associates
P.O. Box 541038
Orlando, FL 32854-1038

Floyd R. Self
Messer, Vickers, Caparello,
French, Madsen & Lewis, P.A.
P.O. Box 1876
215 S. Monroe St., Suite 701
Tallahassee, FL 32302-1876

Chanthina R. Bryant
Sprint
3065 Cumberland Circle
Atlanta, GA 30339

Michael W. Tye
AT&T Communications of the
Southern States, Inc.
106 East College Avenue
Suite 1410
Tallahassee, FL 32301


Charles J. Beck
Deputy Public Counsel