1	BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION		
2		. 102110 02	
3	In the Matter of:		
4		ATE, CLAIM FOR	DOCKET NO. 060640-TP
5	DAMAGES, COMPLAINT,	AND OTHER STATEMENTS EVERCOM SYSTEMS, INC.	
6 7	D/B/A CORRECTIONAL B BELLSOUTH CORPORATIO	ILLING SERVICES AND	
8	COMPLAINT TO INVESTI	GATE EVERCOM SYSTEMS,	DOCKET NO. 070151-TP
9	AND BELLSOUTH TELECO	NAL BILLING SERVICES MMUNICATIONS, INC. ON SS FOR IMPROPER CALL	Salvinos.
10	BLOCKING AS ESTABLIS PSC-07-0207-PCO-TP.		
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14		C VERSIONS OF THIS TRAN	
15	THE OFFI	CCIAL TRANSCRIPT OF THE	HEARING,
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17	PROCEEDINGS:	AGENDA CONFERENCE ITEM NO. 5	
18	BEFORE:	CHAIRMAN LISA POLAK ED	
19		COMMISSIONER MATTHEW M COMMISSIONER KATRINA J	
20	DATE:	Tuesday, March 27, 200	7
21	PLACE:	Betty Easley Conferenc	e Center
22		Room 148 4075 Esplanade Way	
23		Tallahassee, Florida	
24	REPORTED BY:	LINDA BOLES, CRR, RPR Official FPSC Reporter	
25		(850) 413-6734	
			DOCUMENT NUMBER - DATE

FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSIBLE 840 APR -25

1	PARTICIPATING:		
2	MANUEL A. GURDIAN, ESQUIRE, representing AT&T		
3	Florida.		
4	JON MOYLE, SR., ESQUIRE, representing Evercom		
5	Systems, Inc. d/b/a Correctional Billing Services.		
6	BESSIE RUSS and MICHAEL RUSS, representing themselves		
7	(via telephone.)		
8	MICHAEL COOKE, GENERAL COUNSEL, LEE ENG TAN, ESQUIRE		
9	and CATHERINE BEARD, representing the Florida Public Service		
10	Commission Staff.		
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PROCEEDINGS

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: We are on Item 5, and my understanding is that we have Bessie Russ and Michael Russ on the phone with us. Are you with us?

MR. RUSS: Yes, ma'am.

MS. RUSS: Yes, ma'am.

Shared with you that we are having some technical difficulties here in Tallahassee today, and so it is much noisier in this room than it usually is for our proceedings. So we are going to try this, and if it turns out that you cannot hear us, please let me know that. If it turns out that we cannot hear you, we will see what is the best way to proceed after that. But we're going to give it a try if you will just bear with us. And so I'm going to start by asking our staff to introduce the item.

MS. TAN: Good morning, Commissioners. Lee Eng Tan on behalf of staff. Item Number 5 is Docket Number 060640 and Docket Number 070151. These two docket are complaints by customers Bessie Russ and Michael Russ regarding service by Evercom Systems, Inc., doing business as Correctional Billing Services, and BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc., now AT&T Florida. Staff would be happy to introduce each issue to you or proceed at your pleasure. Staff is also available for further questions. And representatives of Embarq, BellSouth

and Evercom are available for questioning. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. All right. If you would give us just sort of an overview, not necessarily issue by issue, but if you could kind of give us an overview of the item that is before us, and then we'll hear from the consumers and then we'll hear from the companies and we'll go from there.

MS. TAN: I'd be happy to do an overview.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you.

MS. TAN: Issue Number 1 addresses the outstanding motion to dismiss that was filed by BellSouth regarding the petition filed by Petitioner Bessie Russ. Staff recommends that the petition should, by Bessie Russ should be dismissed in part with prejudice for lack of jurisdiction. And then we also have -- staff recommends that the Commission dismiss without prejudice the Petitioner's claim in regards to waivers due to lack of specific specificity and that the appropriate companies don't have reasonable notice.

Regarding -- sorry.

MS. BEARD: The rest of the issues we were able to address. Issue 2 specifically addressed whether or not Bessie was able or, excuse me, was improperly blocked. We found that her service was blocked but it was not blocked improperly. Excuse me.

The next issue came about regarding whether or not she was improperly attempted marketing services from BellSouth,

which we also found was not the case.

Another question of the Petitioner was whether or not she was charged higher telephone charges than stated in the tariff, which was not the case as well.

Finally we get to Michael Russ's case, which was specifically regarding whether or not he was blocked from receiving incoming calls improperly. He was also blocked from receiving calls, but the block was not improper.

That takes us back to the, back to the --

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. And you did say that in the analysis of staff the block was not improper.

MS. BEARD: Yes, ma'am.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. Working on my ears. Okay.

Okay. Then I would ask the representatives of the companies that are here, if you would, just go ahead and identify yourselves to us and to those that are on the phone, and then I'll look to the consumers and then I'll come back to you for response and comment.

MR. GURDIAN: Good morning, Commissioners. Manny Gurdian on behalf of AT&T Florida.

MR. MOYLE: Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Jon Moyle, Sr., the Moyle Flanigan Law Firm, and I'm here on behalf of Evercom d/b/a Correctional Billing Services.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you. And Ms. Russ and Mr. Russ, can you hear us?

MS. RUSS: I can very well.

MR. RUSS: Yes.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. I am so glad to hear that.

If you would, this is an opportunity for you to share with us your comments and concerns.

MR. RUSS: Okay. I guess I'll start first, if that's okay.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Yes.

MR. RUSS: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen of the Commission. I appreciate you taking the time and hearing and listening to my point of view with regard to the current matter.

The unusual economic advantage of an exclusive service area and monopolistic status given a utility in our free market economy in exchange for the utility relinquishing its usual right to determine the level of service it provides and to set its own competitive rates in submitting those two matters to a governmental authority which regulates the quality of service to be provided and sets rates to provide the utility a reasonable return on its investment. The corporation performing a public or quasi-public service may, under the police power of the state, be regulated in the interest of public convenience and necessity, provided such regulation bears reference to the public welfare and does not take from the corporation any of the essential rights and privileges that

its charter confers. Although there may be numerous public policy reasons, the most prevalent ones have a direct bearing on the particular matter before this Commission: Providing affordable and reliable utility services to the public.

That obligation to regulate and oversee that this obligation is met within reason falls on the Public Service Commission. For the power of the state legislator to regulate public utilities may either be exercised by directly or, alternatively, it may confer its power on a state agency such as the Public Service Commission.

The terms of a contract for the rendering of such services of a public nature are subject to the right of a governmental authority under existing laws to regulate the service and the charges made for it.

On numerous occasions BellSouth has switched my service without my permission, interfered with my service and even disconnected my service even though all regulatory charges were paid. While these statements may seem hard to believe or taken with a grain of salt as there is not a mountain of evidence before the Commission at this time, such evidence does exist. Currently I do have in my possession such evidence which shows or proves that the aforementioned acts were performed by BellSouth alone. These acts wholly and completely defy public policy which has been set forth in statutes by the Florida Legislature and an interpretation of the statutes that

the Public Service Commission is charged with enforcing. The interpretation of the statutes by the agency charged with the enforcement of such statutes is entitled to great weight by the courts and the courts will not and should not depart from that construction unless it is clearly erroneous.

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While I realize many of the above statements have no direct bearing on the current proceeding before this Commission, I felt compelled to make such statements. And I respectfully request that if this Commission does dismiss the complaints before it, that it do so without prejudice and allow the refiling of these complaints and for the complainants therein to submit the necessary evidence to support their claims.

I believe that each complaint should be adjudicated on its factual merits and not summarily dismissed or set aside. Alternatively, I ask that this Commission postpone making any decisions with regard to the complaints before it and allow the Petitioners or Complainants to amend their complaints and supply the necessary evidence to support their claims. Although these claims might seem moot, the events alleged within those complaints are most certainly capable of repetition and evading review (phonetic) as it may be months before such issues are presented before the Commission again. And with that, I close.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Excuse me. Thank you, Mr. Russ.

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And, Ms. Russ, do you have additional comment?

MS. RUSS: I would just like to reiterate on what Mr. Russ has said, and I agree wholeheartedly because my service on my line was disconnected without any such cause or reasons that were within BellSouth and Correctional Billing Service, which is Evercom. There was not a balance due at the time. And each time I talked with each party, they continued to switch back and forth and say it was the other one that did it, it was not I, constantly putting blame.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you.

I'd like to hear from AT&T, if I could.

MR. GURDIAN: Thank you, Commissioners. AT&T Florida supports staff's recommendation. AT&T Florida has not improperly interfered with the Petitioners' service. It has not improperly blocked their telephone service. As staff indicated in their recommendation, they investigated and found that neither BellSouth doing business as AT&T Florida or Evercom did anything improper. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you.

Mr. Moyle.

MR. MOYLE: May it please the Commission. On behalf of our client we also urge the Commission to adopt the recommendations of staff as to factual determination as to the disposition of the claim and dismissal of this docket, and we agree and adopt the comments made by counsel for AT&T -

BellSouth as to the conduct of Evercom Systems d/b/a 1 2 Correctional Systems, Inc. Thank you. CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you, Mr. Moyle. 3 4 Commissioner Carter. COMMISSIONER CARTER: Thank you, Madam Chairman. 5 A question for staff. Did you have opportunity to 6 have communications with the Russes, Mr. and Ms. Russ prior to 7 8 this case being filed? 9 MS. TAN: Yes, we did. 10 COMMISSIONER CARTER: And did you have an opportunity to explain to them the procedure, perspective that we operate 11 12 under here at the Commission? 13 MS. TAN: We inherited this docket, but we understand that that communication was made with them. 14 15 COMMISSIONER CARTER: Okay. May I ask direct? 16 Mr. and Ms. Russ, can you hear me okay? 17 MS. RUSS: Yes. 18 COMMISSIONER CARTER: This is Commissioner Carter. 19 wanted to ask you -- you heard my question about staff. they have an opportunity to discuss this matter with you about 20 the procedures that we operate under here at the Commission? 21 22 MR. RUSS: Yes. 23 COMMISSIONER CARTER: Let me ask you this, Mr. Russ. In your comments you alluded to some significant information 24 that you have that we may not have, we may not be privy to 25

today. Did you offer that to our staff prior to the filing of 1 this matter? 2 MR. RUSS: No, I did not because it doesn't have a 3 direct bearing on the matter. The dockets were combined and I 4 didn't introduce that into my complaint. 5 COMMISSIONER CARTER: Okay. So you've given them all 6 of the information that you thought was pertinent to this 7 matter. 8 MR. RUSS: Yes, to this particular matter. 9 COMMISSIONER CARTER: Okay. Are you, are you 10 familiar with the recommendations of what staff has made here 11 today in this matter? Were you familiar -- did you understand 12 what they said in their recommendation? 13 MR. RUSS: Yes. They're asking that part of it be 14 dismissed with prejudice, the other part without, and BellSouth 15 16 should at least acknowledge that Ms. Russ does not want certain services marketed to her. 17 COMMISSIONER CARTER: Thank you. Madam Chairman, if 18 I may ask your indulgence. 19 CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner Carter. 20 COMMISSIONER CARTER: Just another question of staff. 21 Staff, did we try in the process of this matter prior to this 22 actual filing, did we have staff to maybe try and deal with 23 this under the rubric of consumer concerns? 24

MS. TAN: Are you talking about our consumer

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complaint system?

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Yes, ma'am.

MS. TAN: This was filed directly as a petition, and prior to receiving the petition we did not have any indication that there was an issue.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Madam Chairman, it just seems to me that this may have been more appropriate there as a matter of a consumer issue rather than going through a full-blown docket to have a situation where you're talking about dismissing with prejudice, dismissing without prejudice when you've got consumers who are obviously not represented by counsel or anything like that. It certainly seems to me that this may be more appropriate as a, as a consumer complaint versus being a matter before the Commission. I don't know if you agree with that, Madam Chairman, but it just seems to me that there may be, it just may, it may be more appropriate in that area.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Mr. Cooke.

MR. COOKE: Commissioners, it's my understanding this was filed as a petition by the consumer, and that's their choice. And having done that, we would have to process it as a petition, which is what we did.

I do believe -- my understanding is that we did have discussions with the consumers in this matter, and to some extent that would serve the effect of the more informal process

that they might have chosen to pursue. But that is their choice. And if we get essentially a filing as a petition, then we need to process it.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner Carter.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Mr. Russ.

MR. RUSS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: You heard my line of questioning with staff here and my thinking out loud?

MR. RUSS: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Would you agree with me that this is probably a matter that's best discussed as a consumer complaint with you working with our staff to try to resolve whatever issues there are versus the Commission getting into this in the context of a full-blown docket?

MR. RUSS: Well, originally I thought so, but these problems with BellSouth have been going on for over four years. And each time I go to the Commission with an informal complaint, they'll stop doing whatever they're doing for about three months and then they'll start up again. I have been billed \$300 on one of my bills for a cell phone that doesn't even belong to me, it belongs to a Mildred somebody, and it's been on there for years and they won't take it off. And, I mean, that's just the tip of the iceberg. They just keep doing things, doing things, disconnecting my service, even though all of the regulated fees are paid. And I do have proof that my

service was disconnected. There was a \$25 reconnection fee on one of my bills. They refused to credit me for that. They have consistently double billed me for items.

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MCI was supposed to be my local toll company and MCI was also my long distance company. BellSouth continued to bill me for local toll calls and so did MCI. I mean, it's been things like this continuously, continuously, continuously, and I'm at the point, I'm just frustrated with it.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Well, let me, let me apologize to you for your frustration. But I still -- it just seems to me with the documentation -- the issues that you raise are abundantly clear to me that they should have fallen within the context of our consumer complaint system, and we resolve complaints like this every single day. And it seems to me if you've got the documentation that they've done that and gone back, and then we want to make sure that all of our citizens receive the proper protection under the consumer protection auspices here at our agency, and it just seems to me the things that you're speaking of, Mr. Russ, those things fall within the confines of our consumer complaint. And I just -- I think it would be better served -- it seems to me, if I were you, I'd rather have the problem resolved particularly rather than going through a process here that's going to, it may be drawn out, it could be appealed and through the process. I would think that you'd want relief. And if they've done that to you and it's

cost you some money, you're entitled to a refund. And I think that we'd love to work with you on that and get you whatever relief that you're due. And I think that you, you know, you've gone through -- you say four years; is that what you said?

MR. RUSS: Yes, sir. They won't give me the refund.

I have filed informal complaints with the Public Service

Commission, and they just, they won't. They said they don't have to and they're not going to. That's their response.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Madam Chairman, it just seems to me that -- I mean, if we've got a situation in our operation where a consumer has an issue and the consumer issue has not been resolved, and whenever our people step into it, it abates for a while, and it goes back after it looks like we're not looking, I think that's a systemic problem that we need to get to.

Mr. Russ, I mean, I can't tell you what to do, but I would suggest that you allow us as a Commission -- if there's a problem in our system, we need to fix the broken problem in our system. I want you to get redress. Every one of us as Commissioners here work tirelessly, not just here at the bench, but we go around the state talking to our citizens and customers and trying to resolve whatever issues that are outstanding. A lot of times we'll go for an issue that may be dealing with electricity and a person will come up with a phone issue and we'll try to resolve that. I believe, Mr. Russ, that

we can resolve your issue prior to having to go through this prolonged case. And I don't know, Madam Chairman, where we are procedurally, maybe we can ask Mr. Cooke, but, Mr. Russ, if you're willing to give us an opportunity, as Commissioners let us look into this matter. Because what you're saying -- in my opinion, Madam Chairman, what he's saying, these issues fall perfectly within the confines of consumer complaints that we resolve every single day, and this case as it's presented before us does not put us in a posture to resolve the case. I want to have the case resolved, and I know you do too.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Thank you, Commissioner Carter.

Commissioner McMurrian.

COMMISSIONER McMURRIAN: Chairman, my question was along the lines of what staff addressed earlier. It was my understanding that Mr. Russ was given the option of pursuing this on a complaint basis or his petition because, as I understood it, there were two things essentially filed at the same time and that staff discussed with him the options. But maybe I misunderstood. But could you clarify that for me?

MS. BEARD: That is correct. They were given the option of whether or not they wanted to pursue this as a complaint or as a formal petition, and they chose the formal petition.

COMMISSIONER McMURRIAN: And I guess just as a follow-up -- and, Commissioner Carter, I just wanted to make

sure that that was clear because I had heard -- I understood it 1 a little differently in my discussions with them yesterday from what I've heard today. I think that Mr. Cooke did say that it was up to the customer to choose one path or the other, and 4 that if they did file a petition, then it's essentially our 5 duty to deal with it in that fashion. So I'm having some 6 concerns. And it also sounds like Mr. Russ has some concerns beyond what's before us, and maybe those would be appropriate 8 to go through the complaint process and try that avenue first, 9 as you've suggested to him. But perhaps deal with the issues 10 before us today as, as I understand the customer chose to deal 11 with them, but. 12

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner Carter.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Mr. Russ?

MR. RUSS: Yes, sir.

Can you hear me? COMMISSIONER CARTER:

MR. RUSS: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Let me ask you something, sir.

MR. RUSS: Okay.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Would you do me a favor

personally?

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MR. RUSS: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Whatever we do today, those complaints that you have, would you please, sir, file them under our consumer division so we can resolve these?

Notwithstanding -- whatever we do today -- it seems to me that if a customer comes to the Florida Public Service Commission with a complaint and that complaint is not resolved, we have not done our jobs. So regardless of what we do today as a Commission, Mr. Russ, please file the information as, as it pertains. Because it seems to me that if you have a complaint about your service and they bill you for someone else -- I mean, I know that myself. I've sat down there and listened on the line to a complaint and I've been down in our consumer services division and I've been with our people as they're on the case. And if there's a problem with you receiving service, quality of service, time of service, billing for service, and if any of that stuff is inappropriate, we need to take care of it. So whatever we do today, Mr. Russ, would you give me your word that you will file the necessary information so we can investigate this? And if there's a problem with our consumer services division, we want to get to the bottom of it. Can I get that commitment from you, sir?

MR. RUSS: Yes, sir.

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COMMISSIONER CARTER: Thank you.

MS. BEARD: Commissioners, can I also say that staff would be happy to contact Mr. Russ to discuss the additional issues that have come up today that we did not address in our recommendation. We would like to seek relief for him as well.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Mr. Cooke?

MR. COOKE: I'm not sure where the Commission is at this point. I guess just a couple of points of clarification. One is this is a customer complaint. It is a formal complaint as opposed to using an informal process. So we are resolving it, although the recommendation is to find that the companies did not do anything improper.

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I'm also hearing, just listening on the phone, that other complaints have been filed that are not related to this matter and those have been processed informally in the past.

And as a result of that, it sounded like the customer chose to pursue a formal process.

One other point that may be helpful here, given that Mr. Russ has talked about additional information, this is PAA and you could decide this and staff could work with the customer to see what that information is and help them decide if they wanted to pursue this further as a PAA.

Alternatively, if it is an unrelated matter, nothing precludes them from filing an informal complaint on that unrelated matter if it's an additional matter that really isn't addressed in what's being decided today.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner Carter, if I may, just let me see if the companies have, representatives have additional comment at this time to Evercom and AT&T. Your choice.

MR. GURDIAN: No, Commissioner, unless you have some

questions for us.

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MR. MOYLE: No.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Carter.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Madam Chairman -- I thank you, Mr. Cooke, for that explanation. I understand that. And based upon the facts before us today, you know, staff has made a good recommendation. And I think from what Mr. Cooke has said is that notwithstanding what we do today is that the Russes can still file whatever customer complaints that there are. But based upon the facts that are presented to us today, we have to stay confined within the four corners of this document. So I thank you for that clarification.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Commissioner McMurrian, comment?

COMMISSIONER McMURRIAN: It seems like we're at the point of making a decision on these issues that are before us. And to Mr. Russ and Ms. Russ, I would also say that we look forward to getting more information about your concerns. We do want to help make sure your problems are resolved. And with that, I can move the staff recommendation.

COMMISSIONER CARTER: Second.

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Okay. We have a motion and a second for the staff recommendation in total, and I concur. So all in favor, say aye.

(Unanimous affirmative vote.)

CHAIRMAN EDGAR: Opposed? Show it adopted. And I know that our staff will be in contact. Ms. Russ and Mr. Russ, thank you for your participation with us today. And as Commissioner Carter asked of you, if you would be in touch with our staff and they will work to be in touch with you as well, and I know the companies will also work with our staff to see what is the best, most appropriate steps to resolve the issues in the most appropriate way. So thank you all, and we are done with this item.

(Agenda Item 5 concluded.)

1	STATE OF FLORIDA) : CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER			
2	COUNTY OF LEON)			
3				
4	I, LINDA BOLES, RPR, CRR, Official Commission Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing proceeding was			
5	heard at the time and place herein stated.			
6	IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I stenographically reported the said proceedings; that the same has been transcribed under my direct supervision; and that this transcript constitutes a true transcription of my notes of said			
7				
8	proceedings.			
9	I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative, employee attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative			
LO	or employee of any of the parties' attorneys or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in			
11	the action.			
L2	DATED THIS 🗹 📜 day of April, 2007.			
L3	L'A			
L4	LINDA BOLES, RPR, CRR			
L5	FPSC Official Commission Reporter (850) 413-6734			
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