

ORIGINAL

1                   **BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

2  
3   **In Re:** Request for Review of Proposed

Docket 99-0223-TL

4           Numbering Plan Relief for the 941

5           Area Code

6                               PRE-FILED TESTIMONY

7                               OF WILLIAM W. COUCH

8           **Q           Please state your name and your business address for the**  
9                               **record.**

10          A.           William W. Couch, The Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce,  
11                               1819 Main Street, Sarasota, Florida 34236-5983.

12          **Q.           What is your position with the Chamber of Commerce?**

13          A.           I am the Vice President of Public Affairs.

14          **Q.           How long have you held that position and what are your**  
15                               **responsibilities?**

16          A.           I have been in this position for seven (7) years and serve as the  
17                               Chamber's liaison with the various governmental entities and also  
18                               administer the Leadership of Sarasota program.

19          **Q.           This Docket No. 99-0223-TL is before the Public Service**  
20                               **Commission to consider which portions of the current 941**  
21                               **Area Code service area should retain the 941 designation in**  
22                               **light of the imminent area code split. The 941 NPA Exhaust**  
23                               **Recommended Relief Plan recommends that the Northwest**

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split combine Sarasota County with Bartow, Bradenton, Haines City, Lake Wales, Lakeland, Palmetto, Venice and Winter Haven, and that the 941 Area Code be retained for that portion of the split. The balance of the current 941 Area Code service area, consisting of Arcadia, Avon Park, Bonita Springs, Cape Coral, Fort Myers, Naples, North Naples, North Fort Myers, Okeechobee, Port Charlotte and Sebring, the Southeast split, would be given a new area code. According to the Relief Plan, the exhaust period for the revised 941 Area Code service area is predicted to be 5.2 years. A formal complaint has been filed by Cellular One in Ft. Myers, contesting the decision to retain the 941 Area Code in the Northwest split rather than in the Southeast split. As representative of the Sarasota Chamber of Commerce, do you have any concerns about this proposed split and the predicted exhaust period?

A. Yes. There are approximately 12,000 businesses in Sarasota County, and all of them would be affected to a significant degree should they be required to adopt a new area code. The Chamber believes maintaining the current area code in both Sarasota and Charlotte counties is essential to the development of the two-county region. When area codes are changed, businesses are required to take expensive, non-productive actions. Business

1 clients and customers must be notified of the new area code, and  
2 stationery and business cards must be changed.

3 In order to prosper, businesses need to develop and preserve  
4 effective communications systems, and time spent altering systems  
5 may have serious consequences on their productivity. Changes in  
6 area codes can affect many different systems within the business  
7 enterprise, and if not handled properly, may cause failed  
8 connections and downtime. Examples of some of the systems  
9 affected by an area code change are: fax machine group calling  
10 lists; speed dialers, auto dialers, alarms and PBX (private systems);  
11 outdial lists on computers; wireless phones, paging systems,  
12 burglar alarms; and ISDN termination equipment.

13 Although these problems are not unique to Sarasota County  
14 businesses, coupled with the fact that the number of customers in  
15 the proposed Northwest split exceeds the number of customers in  
16 the proposed Southeast split, the equities weigh in favor of  
17 retaining the 941 Area Code in the proposed Northwest split,  
18 which includes Sarasota County.

19 **Q. If the Commission were to consider alternatives to the**  
20 **proposed Northwest/Southeast split, would you have any**  
21 **recommendation?**

22 A. Yes. My principal concerns are the frequency of area code  
23 changes and the bifurcation of the Englewood community, which

1 lies in both Sarasota and Charlotte counties. Both of these  
2 concerns arise out of the previously discussed steps which  
3 businesses must take to adjust to the new Area Code. the less  
4 frequent these changes are, the better. While area code changes  
5 are inevitable, the impact would be considerably lessened if the  
6 new service areas could be configured so as to result in a longer  
7 exhaust period. The projected exhaust time for the proposed  
8 change is 5.2 years and the last exhaust period was only 3 years.

9 **Q. Would the Chamber be in favor of an overlay method of relief**  
10 **in Sarasota County as a means of getting to an extended**  
11 **exhaust period?**

12 A. No. Although an overlay would eliminate the need for current  
13 businesses to change computer systems and stationery, it would  
14 effectively undermine the concept of a unified, interactive business  
15 community. Moreover, it would be very confusing to customers of  
16 the businesses.

17 **Q. Does this conclude your testimony?**

18 A. Yes, it does.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE  
DOCKET NO. 99-0223-TL

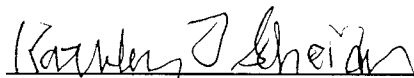
I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the foregoing was served by Federal Express or facsimile the 22 day of March, 1999 to the following:

Mr. Frank Heaton  
Cellular One  
2100 Electronics Lane  
Fort Myers, FL 33912

Ms. Beverly Y. Menars  
c/o Ms. Margo B. Hammar  
GTE Florida Inc.  
106 East College Ave. - Ste. 810  
Tallahassee, FL 32301-7704

F.B. (Ben) Poag  
Sprint-Florida, Inc  
P.O. Box 2214 (MS FLTLH00107)  
Tallahassee, FL 32316-2214

Marty Burton, Esq.  
Charlotte County Attorney's Office  
18500 Murdock Circle  
Port Charlotte, FL 33948-1094

  
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Kathleen F. Schneider, Esq.