

1                   **BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

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

Docket 000604-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.

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

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A.       I am the Vice President of Public Affairs.

14

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

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A.       I have been in this position for eight (8) 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. 000604-TL is before the Public Service  
20       Commission for a determination as to which of four proposed  
21       relief plans for the 941 Area Code Service Area should be  
22       implemented in light of the fact that the 941 Area Code  
23       numbers are predicted to exhaust in the first quarter of 2003.**

DOCUMENT NUMBER-DATE

01528 FEB-26

FPSC-RECORDS/REPORTING

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**The industry recommends an all services distributed overlay relief plan, which would result in all of the current 941 service area having multiple area codes without any relationship to geographical boundaries. As Vice President of Public Affairs for the Sarasota County Chamber of Commerce, do you have any concerns about a distributed overlay as a proposed relief plan?**

A. Yes. Although an overlay would eliminate the need for current businesses to change computer systems and stationery, it would effectively undermine the concept of a unified, interactive business community. In conjunction with other local business groups, the Chamber of Commerce works diligently to foster an interactive business community with common goals and objectives. An overlay would have the perception, as well as the actual effect, of dividing the community into established businesses and new businesses. The new businesses would be at an obvious disadvantage because the 941 Area Code is associated with the local area. For example, if a visitor to Sarasota County, unfamiliar with street addresses, is looking in the yellow pages for a restaurant and sees an area code different from the one he/she is in, the obvious assumption will be that it is out of the geographic area. This is true for any type of business if the potential customer is unfamiliar with street addresses.

1                                   Moreover, a distributed overlay generates confusion for the  
2                                   business itself. If an established business decides to install an  
3                                   additional telephone line or to add a line for a facsimile machine, if  
4                                   the 941 number block has been exhausted, the new lines will be  
5                                   assigned a different area code than the one currently in place. This  
6                                   would be extremely confusing for both the business and its  
7                                   customers.

8                   **Q.           In your opinion, which, if any, of the proposed alternatives**  
9                   **would have the least disruptive effect on businesses in Sarasota**  
10                  **County?**

11                  A.           Alternative 4 would create the least confusion, particularly if  
12                                   Sarasota County is able to retain the 941 area code. Alternative 4  
13                                   keeps Manatee, Sarasota and Charlotte counties together, splitting  
14                                   the area code service area at the Charlotte-Lee county line. The  
15                                   Chamber of Commerce believes that maintaining the same area  
16                                   code for Sarasota, Manatee and Charlotte counties is essential to  
17                                   the development of the tri-county region from a tourism  
18                                   perspective as well as a business perspective.

19                  **Q.           Are you particularly opposed to either Alternative #2, which**  
20                   **splits the City of Punta Gorda from the rest of Charlotte**  
21                   **County or Alternative #3, which splits the Englewood**  
22                   **community from Sarasota County?**

1           A.           Both of these alternatives present the same problems of perception  
2                           and confusion that an overlay presents. Splitting the 941 service  
3                           area so that the Englewood community is separate from the  
4                           Sarasota County is unacceptable from a business perspective.  
5                           Imposing a new area code on a section of a county gives the  
6                           perception that those businesses are in a distant geographical area.  
7                           It is extremely confusing for the potential customers, particularly  
8                           in a high tourism area such as Sarasota County. As a result,  
9                           businesses lose money.

10          **Q.           Do you have any additional concerns about the imminent**  
11                           **exhaust of the 941 area code?**

12          A.           Yes. Steps must be taken other than distributed overlays to extend  
13                           existing exhaust periods. During the 1999 hearings, there was  
14                           extensive discussion about the reasons for short exhaust periods.  
15                           One of the main reasons is the distribution of phone numbers in  
16                           blocks of 10,000. In 1999, the industry and NANPA assured the  
17                           counties that number pooling would be implemented, thereby  
18                           extending the exhaust period of the 1999 geographical split. It is  
19                           my understanding that there have been no statewide efforts to  
20                           accomplish this. The Chamber of Commerce endorses these  
21                           efforts of number conservation and requests that the Commission  
22                           establish a timeframe for this to be accomplished statewide. It  
23                           seems that instead of focusing on conservation efforts, the

1 industry's focus has been on efforts to adopt an overlay.  
2 Unquestionably, that is the easiest remedy for the industry.  
3 However, as discussed, it is problematic for the business  
4 community. On behalf of the Chamber of Commerce, I endorse  
5 Alternative 4 and request that the Commission adopt rules to  
6 implement number conservation measures statewide.

7 **Q. Does that conclude your testimony?**

8 **A. Yes, it does.**

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE  
DOCKET NO. 000604-TL**

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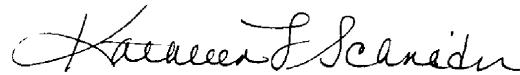
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