

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON  
STAFF REPORT  
PUBLIC MEETING DATE: April 9, 2019

REGULAR \_\_\_\_\_ CONSENT X EFFECTIVE DATE \_\_\_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: March 14, 2019

TO: Public Utility Commission

FROM: Scott Shearer <sup>GS</sup>

THROUGH: Jason Eisdorfer, <sup>EP</sup>Bryan Conway, and Bruce Hellebuyck <sup>BA</sup>

SUBJECT: CITIZENS TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY OF OREGON, INC AND FRONTIER COMMUNICATIONS OF THE NORTHWEST:  
(Docket Nos. ADV 941/Advice No. CT19-01 and ADV 942/Advice No. FR19-01) Requests Approval of Notice of Customer Rights and Responsibilities Language, pursuant to OAR 860-021-0010(6).

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Commission approve Citizens Telecommunications Company of Oregon, Inc. and Frontier Communications of the Northwest's (collectively, the Companies) revised Notice of Customer Rights and Responsibilities (Notice) language as submitted and allow the Notices to go into effect April 24, 2019.

**DISCUSSION:**

Issue

Whether the Commission should approve the Companies' proposed Notice language.

Applicable Rules

Oregon Administrative Rule 860-021-0010(6) states that when service is initiated and not less than once each year thereafter, every large telecommunications utility shall give its residential customers a written summary of their rights and responsibilities. The summary shall include the text of a summary prepared by the Commission's Consumer Services Division or prepared by the telecommunications utility and approved by the Commission.

Under OAR 860-021-0008(5), a large telecommunications utility means any telecommunications utility, as defined in ORS 759.005, which is not partially exempt from regulation under ORS 759.040. To be partially exempt from regulation under ORS 759.040, and thus fall under OAR 860-034-0040(8), a small telecommunications utility may not be affiliated with another kind of public utility providing service in Oregon.

### Analysis

As affiliates, Frontier and Citizens both fall under the customer notice requirements set forth in OAR 860-021-0010(6). Frontier and Citizens stated that they were making these filings because they noted inconsistencies in their consumer notices and are working to use consistent language in all of their notices wherever possible.

The purpose of the Notice language is to provide basic information to customers about utility service and the expectations for both the company and customers. It is not meant to be an all-inclusive list, but simply to cover general topics. Exhibit A shows the current Commission's Consumer Services text summary noted in the OAR. This is the minimum information expected to be provided to customers. Utilities may provide supplemental information to the notice they feel is relevant, as is the case in these filings.

### Conclusion

The information in the Notices provided by the Companies meets the minimum summary requirements as well as providing reasonable additional information.

### **PROPOSED COMMISSION MOTION:**

Approve the Companies' language for the as-filed Notices and allow them to go into effect, as requested, on April 24, 2019.

# Customer Rights and Responsibilities

If you are applying for service or have service with a utility company in Oregon, you have certain rights and obligations. Following is a summary of those rights and obligations prepared by the Consumer Services Section of the Public Utility Commission. The matters described here apply only to electricity, natural gas, telephone and water services regulated by the PUC.

The utility company's main obligation is to provide you with reliable services at rates approved by the PUC. Your main obligations are to pay for the services you use, to not damage or tamper with the company's facilities, and to notify the company if you move, if you wish to change your service or if you have a problem.

**DEPOSITS:** The utility may ask you to pay a deposit. If a deposit is required, you may have the right to pay it in several installments.

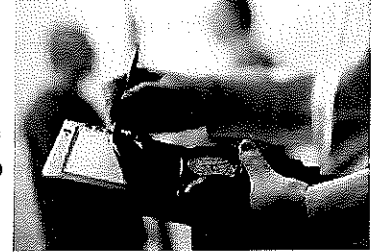
**THIRD-PARTY NOTICES:** You have the option to ask that another person receive your bills and notices if, for some reason, you are unable to receive or understand those bills and notices. Also, you may ask your utility company to furnish you with notices in another language if you do not understand English.

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:** Several programs provide financial help, depending on your circumstances. The **Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP)** provides money to qualified customers who need help with winter heating bills. Also, the major energy utility companies have their own financial assistance programs to help their customers. The **Oregon Lifeline Program** provides discounts on phone bills for eligible low-income customers.

**DISCONNECTION NOTICES:** Before a utility company can disconnect your service, the company must notify you. Electric and gas companies are required to give you a 15-day notice, another notice 5 days before disconnection, and must try to contact you the day the disconnection is scheduled. Telephone and water utilities must provide written notice at least 5 days before service is disconnected.

# Customer Rights and Responsibilities

**MEDICAL CERTIFICATES:** If you or a member of your household has a serious health problem and your utility service is threatened, you may obtain a medical certificate from your doctor or other medical professional who provides your health care. A medical certificate will prevent immediate disconnection of your service and requires your utility to allow you to set up a payment plan to pay any overdue bill. (Medical certificates do not apply to water utilities.)

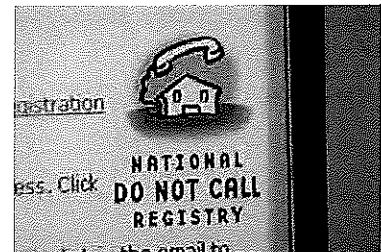


**PAYMENT PLANS:** You may take advantage of one of several special payment options designed to make it easier to pay your electricity or natural gas utility bills. You may pay your bills on an equal-payment plan which will spread out your payments over the year. If you are not able to pay your electricity, gas, or water bills for a period of time and your utility intends to cut off your service, you may also enter into a special agreement to pay the overdue amount over a period of time.



**LATE CHARGES:** Customers are responsible for paying their utility bills on time. Under certain circumstances, utilities may add late-payment charges to bills not paid on time.

**TELEPHONE SOLICITATION:** The Federal government has in place a national "No Call" list for persons who do not want to receive unwanted phone calls from persons or companies trying to sell products and services. You will need to register with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). After you register, your phone number to be placed on the No-Call list it will show up on the registry by the next day. Telemarketers will have 31 days to remove your phone number from their call lists. Your phone number will remain in the registry permanently, unless you choose to remove it. More details are available at [www.donotcall.gov](http://www.donotcall.gov).



**RESOLVING DISPUTES:** If you have a dispute with your utility company that is not resolved by contacting the company, the PUC's Consumer Services Section is available to help you. You may contact the PUC by calling toll free 1-800-522-2404.

If you have questions about any of the matters described in this summary, please contact your local utility company or the PUC Consumer Services Section. If you do not speak English, please try to arrange in advance for an interpreter to help you. While utilities and the PUC are sensitive to special needs of persons who do not speak English, their offices may not have someone available who speaks your primary language.