

September 30, 2020



**FROM THE DESK OF
COMMISSIONER
BRENT BAILEY
CENTRAL DISTRICT OFFICE**



The Central District is pleased to bring you the latest information concerning utility rates, project developments, Public Service Commission actions and other news you can use. I hope you will find this information to be a useful resource to learn about the Public Service Commission, consumer issues and the continuous work we are doing for the citizens in the Central District and across the state of Mississippi. Thank you again for allowing me to serve you in this capacity.

Brent Bailey

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MPSC Reviews Telecommunication Providers' Efforts to Expand Services

This week, the Mississippi Public Service Commission (MPSC) held an open meeting to discuss, evaluate and decide eligible telecommunications carrier (ETC) designations in order for them to access federal Universal Service Fund (USF) or Connect America Fund (CAF) money to support high-cost telephone, mobility and broadband service in Mississippi. Only those telecommunications carriers found to be in compliance with Federal Communication Commission (FCC) requirements for federal program participation are eligible to receive federal funds from the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). Certifying ETCs benefits Mississippians by increasing customer choice and advancing communication technology services. Unfortunately, many areas of Mississippi remain unserved or underserved by modern, high-quality communication or broadband services.

The MPSC reviews applications and certifies initial eligibility of ETCs and determines annual recertification of eligibility. This authority of the states was reaffirmed in 2011 by FCC Order 11-161. In response, the MPSC adopted an all-inclusive checklist of requirements (see Docket 2005-AD-662; Order from Nov. 15, 2012) that current and future ETCs shall comply with in order to receive federal high-cost funding support through USAC. This authority is about all the regulatory oversight that the MPSC has over telecommunication companies. Upon MPSC determination that an ETC has complied with requirements set forth by the FCC, has reported deployment progress to USAC (for broadband), has complied with applicable MPSC Orders, and has properly filed all required Annual Reports to the MPSC, the MPSC will certify to USAC and the FCC by October 1 of each year that ETCs are using and plan to use federal support funding as intended.



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On Monday, September 28, the MPSC took actions on the following items:

Approved all plans for utilization of the Federal Universal Service Fund for the year 2021 filed by Bay Springs Telephone Company, Bruce Telephone Company, Inc., Calhoun City Telephone Company, Inc., CenturyTel of North Mississippi, Inc., Decatur Telephone Company, Franklin Telephone Company, Inc., Frontier Communications of Mississippi, Inc., Fulton Telephone Company, Georgetown Telephone Company, Inc., Lakeside Telephone Company, Mound Bayou Telephone Company, Myrtle Telephone Company, Inc., Noxapater Telephone Company, Sledge Telephone Company, Smithville Telephone Company, Inc., Southeast Mississippi Telephone Company, Inc., and Windstream Mississippi, Inc. These companies are known as rural incumbent carriers. These companies collectively received \$29.8 M in 2019 and expect to receive approximately \$27 M in 2021. (2001-AD-573)

Approved Aristotle Unified Communications, LLC's Plan for Utilization of Federal Universal Service Funding for the year 2021. This company will receive funding through CAF II. (2018-UA-224)

Approved Cellular South Licenses, LLC's Plan for Utilization of Federal Universal Service Funding for the year 2021. (2001-UA-451) **Approved** Telepak Networks, Inc.'s Plan for Utilization of Federal Universal Service Funding for the year 2021. (2003-UA-457) **Approved** Dixie-Net Communications, Inc.'s Plan for Utilization of Federal Universal Service Funding for the year 2021. (2001-UA-198) **Approved** TEC of Jackson, Inc. d/b/a/ TEC's Plan for Utilization of Federal Universal Service Funding for the year 2021. (2003-UA-165) These four companies collectively received \$46 M in federal funding in 2019. They anticipate receiving less in 2021 due to expired obligations under the CAF program.

Approved New Cingular Wireless PCS, LLC d/b/a AT&T Mobility's Plan for Utilization of Federal Universal Service Funding for the year 2021. (2005-UA-174) This company received \$41.3 M in 2019 to support the operations, maintenance and construction of cell sites. The company anticipates receiving less in 2021.

Approved BellSouth Telecommunications, LLC, d/b/a/ AT&T Mississippi's Plan for Utilization of the Federal Universal Service Fund for the year 2021. (2000-AD-040) This company received \$49.77 M in 2019 to support the delivery of broadband to at least 133,000 locations by the end of 2020. This company anticipates receiving a similar amount in 2021.



In all, the carriers above received nearly \$167 M in federal support in 2019 to promote, enhance and expand modern communication services to the rural residents of Mississippi.

These programs help provide voice and broadband service (fixed and mobile) at rates that are comparable to more densely populated urban areas. Were it not for these programs, the majority of rural areas of the state would not meet the financial metrics that a telecommunication carrier requires to feasibly invest in infrastructure. Unfortunately, only approximately \$150 M is projected to come to Mississippi via these programs in 2021. Please watch the [YouTube video recording](#) of the September 28 meeting for more information.

In additional action, the MPSC voted to craft an order under 2005-AD-662 that would initiate a review of the ETC checklist utilized by the MPSC and the Public Utilities Staff in the review of USF, CAF and the upcoming Rural Digital Opportunity Fund expenditures. The order shall also review the confidentiality provisions that ETCs use when making filings to the MPSC. The MPSC intends to invite comments from all carriers and other stakeholders with interest in this matter.

It is the policy of the State of Mississippi to "promote adequate, reliable and economical {utility} service to all citizens and residents of the state." My office will utilize the limited authorities granted to the MPSC to advance this policy for the benefit of Mississippians who desire advanced, high-quality telecommunication services at just, reasonable and affordable rates. The success of our schools, small businesses, rural health care facilities and more are depending on it.



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LAST WEEK *at the* MPSC



✉ [Additional information](#) was submitted to support the CPCN Transfer from Developers, Inc. to Waste Water Solutions, LLC in Lauderdale County.

[Additional information](#) to support the purchase of [sewer system assets](#) of Mississippi Natural, Inc. located in Rankin, Lamar and Lauderdale Counties was submitted by Waste Water Solutions, Inc.

✉ The Town of Sallis submitted a [Notice of Intent](#) to increase rates for water service in its certificated area in Attala and Leake Counties. The MPSC [suspended the filing](#) for further investigation.

✉ Mississippi Power Co. filed a [Petition for CPCN](#) for the construction and operation of a solar generation and battery storage demonstration project in Leake County, MS.

✉ CenterPoint Energy filed its compliance tariffs for following natural gas service rate schedules: [Large Volume](#); [Residential](#); [Commercial](#); [Transportation](#). CenterPoint also filed its compliance tariff for the [Supplemental Growth Rider](#) initiative.

The monthly docket meeting of the Mississippi Public Service Commission will take place on **October 6 at 10 a.m.** This meeting will take place telephonically with streaming broadcast over the MPSC YouTube channel at <https://www.psc.ms.gov/webcast>. The [meeting notice](#) is now available and the agenda will soon be available at www.psc.ms.gov.



Last week, our Consumer Complaint Specialists handled a total of **33** complaints in the Central District.

Telecommunications	16
Electric Companies	15
Water/Sewage	2

Last week, the Central District received a total of **224** complaints from consumers against potential telemarketers through our No Call app, website and mail-ins. The top three general issues reported by consumers are related to financial loans/consolidate debt, health products/prescription drugs, and insurance.

We encourage consumers to file telemarketing complaints with the Federal Trade Commission at <http://www.donotcall.gov/> in addition to filing complaints with the Mississippi Public Service Commission.