

tions of public telecommunications network interconnectivity standards that promote access to—

- (A) public telecommunications networks used to provide telecommunications service;
- (B) network capabilities and services by individuals with disabilities; and
- (C) information services by subscribers of rural telephone companies.

**(c) Commission's authority**

Nothing in this section shall be construed as expanding or limiting any authority that the Commission may have under law in effect before February 8, 1996.

**(d) "Public telecommunications network interconnectivity" defined**

As used in this section, the term "public telecommunications network interconnectivity" means the ability of two or more public telecommunications networks used to provide telecommunications service to communicate and exchange information without degeneration, and to interact in concert with one another.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §256, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 76.)

**§ 257. Market entry barriers proceeding**

**(a) Elimination of barriers**

Within 15 months after February 8, 1996, the Commission shall complete a proceeding for the purpose of identifying and eliminating, by regulations pursuant to its authority under this chapter (other than this section), market entry barriers for entrepreneurs and other small businesses in the provision and ownership of telecommunications services and information services, or in the provision of parts or services to providers of telecommunications services and information services.

**(b) National policy**

In carrying out subsection (a), the Commission shall seek to promote the policies and purposes of this chapter favoring diversity of media voices, vigorous economic competition, technological advancement, and promotion of the public interest, convenience, and necessity.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §257, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 77; amended Pub. L. 115-141, div. P, title IV, §402(f), Mar. 23, 2018, 132 Stat. 1089.)

**Editorial Notes**

REFERENCES IN TEXT

This chapter, referred to in text, was in the original "this Act", meaning act June 19, 1934, ch. 652, 48 Stat. 1064, known as the Communications Act of 1934, which is classified principally to this chapter. For complete classification of this Act to the Code, see section 609 of this title and Tables.

AMENDMENTS

2018—Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 115-141 struck out subsec. (c). Text read as follows: "Every 3 years following the completion of the proceeding required by subsection (a), the Commission shall review and report to Congress on—

"(1) any regulations prescribed to eliminate barriers within its jurisdiction that are identified under

subsection (a) and that can be prescribed consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity; and

"(2) the statutory barriers identified under subsection (a) that the Commission recommends be eliminated, consistent with the public interest, convenience, and necessity."

**§ 258. Illegal changes in subscriber carrier selections**

**(a) Prohibition**

No telecommunications carrier shall submit or execute a change in a subscriber's selection of a provider of telephone exchange service or telephone toll service except in accordance with such verification procedures as the Commission shall prescribe. Nothing in this section shall preclude any State commission from enforcing such procedures with respect to intrastate services.

**(b) Liability for charges**

Any telecommunications carrier that violates the verification procedures described in subsection (a) and that collects charges for telephone exchange service or telephone toll service from a subscriber shall be liable to the carrier previously selected by the subscriber in an amount equal to all charges paid by such subscriber after such violation, in accordance with such procedures as the Commission may prescribe. The remedies provided by this subsection are in addition to any other remedies available by law.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §258, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 77.)

**§ 259. Infrastructure sharing**

**(a) Regulations required**

The Commission shall prescribe, within one year after February 8, 1996, regulations that require incumbent local exchange carriers (as defined in section 251(h) of this title) to make available to any qualifying carrier such public switched network infrastructure, technology, information, and telecommunications facilities and functions as may be requested by such qualifying carrier for the purpose of enabling such qualifying carrier to provide telecommunications services, or to provide access to information services, in the service area in which such qualifying carrier has requested and obtained designation as an eligible telecommunications carrier under section 214(e) of this title.

**(b) Terms and conditions of regulations**

The regulations prescribed by the Commission pursuant to this section shall—

- (1) not require a local exchange carrier to which this section applies to take any action that is economically unreasonable or that is contrary to the public interest;
- (2) permit, but shall not require, the joint ownership or operation of public switched network infrastructure and services by or among such local exchange carrier and a qualifying carrier;
- (3) ensure that such local exchange carrier will not be treated by the Commission or any State as a common carrier for hire or as offer-

ing common carrier services with respect to any infrastructure, technology, information, facilities, or functions made available to a qualifying carrier in accordance with regulations issued pursuant to this section;

(4) ensure that such local exchange carrier makes such infrastructure, technology, information, facilities, or functions available to a qualifying carrier on just and reasonable terms and conditions that permit such qualifying carrier to fully benefit from the economies of scale and scope of such local exchange carrier, as determined in accordance with guidelines prescribed by the Commission in regulations issued pursuant to this section;

(5) establish conditions that promote cooperation between local exchange carriers to which this section applies and qualifying carriers;

(6) not require a local exchange carrier to which this section applies to engage in any infrastructure sharing agreement for any services or access which are to be provided or offered to consumers by the qualifying carrier in such local exchange carrier's telephone exchange area; and

(7) require that such local exchange carrier file with the Commission or State for public inspection, any tariffs, contracts, or other arrangements showing the rates, terms, and conditions under which such carrier is making available public switched network infrastructure and functions under this section.

**(c) Information concerning deployment of new services and equipment**

A local exchange carrier to which this section applies that has entered into an infrastructure sharing agreement under this section shall provide to each party to such agreement timely information on the planned deployment of telecommunications services and equipment, including any software or upgrades of software integral to the use or operation of such telecommunications equipment.

**(d) "Qualifying carrier" defined**

For purposes of this section, the term "qualifying carrier" means a telecommunications carrier that—

(1) lacks economies of scale or scope, as determined in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Commission pursuant to this section; and

(2) offers telephone exchange service, exchange access, and any other service that is included in universal service, to all consumers without preference throughout the service area for which such carrier has been designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier under section 214(e) of this title.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §259, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 77.)

**§ 260. Provision of telemessaging service**

**(a) Nondiscrimination safeguards**

Any local exchange carrier subject to the requirements of section 251(c) of this title that provides telemessaging service—

(1) shall not subsidize its telemessaging service directly or indirectly from its telephone exchange service or its exchange access; and

(2) shall not prefer or discriminate in favor of its telemessaging service operations in its provision of telecommunications services.

**(b) Expedited consideration of complaints**

The Commission shall establish procedures for the receipt and review of complaints concerning violations of subsection (a) or the regulations thereunder that result in material financial harm to a provider of telemessaging service. Such procedures shall ensure that the Commission will make a final determination with respect to any such complaint within 120 days after receipt of the complaint. If the complaint contains an appropriate showing that the alleged violation occurred, the Commission shall, within 60 days after receipt of the complaint, order the local exchange carrier and any affiliates to cease engaging in such violation pending such final determination.

**(c) "Telemessaging service" defined**

As used in this section, the term "telemessaging service" means voice mail and voice storage and retrieval services, any live operator services used to record, transcribe, or relay messages (other than telecommunications relay services), and any ancillary services offered in combination with these services.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §260, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 79.)

**§ 261. Effect on other requirements**

**(a) Commission regulations**

Nothing in this part shall be construed to prohibit the Commission from enforcing regulations prescribed prior to February 8, 1996, in fulfilling the requirements of this part, to the extent that such regulations are not inconsistent with the provisions of this part.

**(b) Existing State regulations**

Nothing in this part shall be construed to prohibit any State commission from enforcing regulations prescribed prior to February 8, 1996, or from prescribing regulations after February 8, 1996, in fulfilling the requirements of this part, if such regulations are not inconsistent with the provisions of this part.

**(c) Additional State requirements**

Nothing in this part precludes a State from imposing requirements on a telecommunications carrier for intrastate services that are necessary to further competition in the provision of telephone exchange service or exchange access, as long as the State's requirements are not inconsistent with this part or the Commission's regulations to implement this part.

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title II, §261, as added Pub. L. 104-104, title I, §101(a), Feb. 8, 1996, 110 Stat. 79.)

**§ 262. Ensuring the integrity of voice communications**

**(a) Registration and compliance by intermediate providers**

An intermediate provider that offers or holds itself out as offering the capability to transmit