

RCA May Soon Ask Globcom To Reconsider

Communications industry sources believe that RCA Alaska Communications, Inc., and RCA Global Communications, Inc., will soon ask the Federal Communications Commission to reconsider its decision, announced last week, which would require the RCA companies to establish a new and separate corporation to own and operate RCA's satellite operations. The Tundra Times has learned that the RCA companies are expected to ask for reconsideration on several parts of the complex decision, and for clarification on others.

State officials are reportedly also considering filing a request for clarification on some points.

The FCC said that RCA must establish the separate corporation and keep all related funds separate in order to avoid cross-funding of the RCA companies.

State officials saw this as a victory. The state had filed a document in the FCC cases on Oct. 24 asking that RCA Alascom be completely divorced

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from ownership or funding of the satellites, and just lease time on them as do other customers. Both Robert Walp, of the Governor's Office of Telecommunications, and Rep. Fred Brohn (D-Fairbanks) had explained to TT in previous interviews that the RCA plan might have caused Alaskan telephone users to subsidize RCA operations that are completely unrelated to Alaska.

The FCC apparently went even further than the state had asked.

If the RCA companies do ask for reconsideration, they must do so within a week. Otherwise they may be in violation of a part of the FCC order that tells them to file certain documents and contracts within 15 days of the order, officially issued on Nov. 6.

The FCC left some issues undecided, but made it clear that the requirements of the new RCA company were part of a final order.

Ownership of the small earth stations (disputed between RCA and the state) is one such issue.

Also undecided are points raised in a competing application by American Telephone & Telegraph. ATT&T says it should serve Alaska with communications satellites, not RCA.

The FCC said that these questions would be set for hearing within 90 days if the parties did not negotiate a settlement of their differences. The order is read by some sources as a "kick in the pants" to the RCA companies, the State of Alaska and AT&T to settle their differences, using as mediator Walter Hinchman, who heads the FCC's common carrier bureau.

The FCC decision left open the possibility that RCA Alascom might be ordered to lease space on the new RCA satellites, on an AT&T satellite, or both, or even to purchase an interest in either or both. The state is expected to oppose any such ownership, still fearing that Alaskan dollars would still support other far-flung RCA companies, even after the setup of the new corporation.