State of Florida

Public Service Commission



-M-E-M-O-R-A-N-D-U-M-

DATE: February 22, 2000

TO: Steve Tribble, Director of Administration

FROM: Tim Vaccard, Senior Attorney, Division of Legal Services

RE: Docket No. 991664-TX - Initiation of show cause proceedings against Richard

Austin for apparent violation of Rule 25-24.805, F.A.C., Certificate of Public

Convenience and Necessity Required.

On January 7, 2000, the Commission issued Order No. PSC-00-0072-SC-TX, in which it ordered Mr. Richard Austin, president of C.I.O., Inc. (CIO), to show cause, in writing within 21 days, why he should not be fined \$25,000 for apparent violation of Rule 25-24.805, Florida Administrative Code, Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity Required.

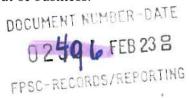
The Order to Show Cause also provided that failure to respond to that Order would be deemed an admission of the facts alleged, waiver of a right to a hearing, and the fines would be deemed assessed. In the event that CIO did not respond and the fines were not paid within ten business days after the Order to Show Cause became final, the Order required that the fines be forwarded to the Department of Banking and Finance, Office of the Comptroller, for collection.

Order No. PSC-00-0072-SC-TX became final on January 28, 2000. Mr. Austin did not respond to the Order to Show Cause nor did he remit the assessed fines. Therefore, we submit this matter to your office for approval to forward the account to the Department of Banking and Finance, Comptroller's Office, for further collection efforts or permission to write-off the account.

The events leading to our determination are outlined below for your convenience.

- 1. In September, 1998, TeleConex, Inc. d/b/a TeleConex (TeleConex), a certificated alternative local exchange company (ALEC), entered into a marketing arrangement with CIO. On May 9, 1999, CIO entered into a marketing agreement with Pre-Cell Solutions, Inc. (Pre-Cell), a certificated ALEC.
- 2. On May 12, 1999, the Division of Consumer Affairs (CAF) received a complaint lodged by TeleConex against Pre-Cell regarding Family Phone Company (a.k.a. CIO) calling TeleConex's customers and telling them that TeleConex was bankrupt and going out of business.





On June 24, 1999, staff met with TeleConex to discuss the problems they were having with CIO. TeleConex stated that CIO was collecting money from customers on its behalf and not forwarding the monies to TeleConex. In addition, TeleConex alleged that CIO was marketing TeleConex's customers stating that TeleConex was in bankruptcy and it could provide the customers with a less expensive service.

- 3. On July 27, 1999, CIO submitted its application for ALEC service in the State of Florida.
- 4. On July 30, 1999, staff mailed a letter to CIO stating that it needed to amend its corporate name, price list, and the application. On September 21, 1999, CIO submitted a revised application signed by Mr. Austin along with a request to withdraw its price list. CIO stated that it would submit a price list prior to providing local service.
- 5. On September 28, 1999, Pre-Cell terminated its marketing agreement with CIO for CIO's failure to remit monies collected from customers for telephone service to Pre-Cell. In October, 1999, staff began receiving complaints from customers regarding CIO and Pre-Cell.
- 6. On October 20, 1999, notice was sent to Mr. Austin by the Division of Auditing and Financial Analysis informing him of an investigation of financial records.
- 7. On October 22, 1999, BellSouth provided staff a list of telephone accounts that were billed to CIO and a list of telephone accounts billed to one account in the name of Richard Austin. BellSouth disconnected all of these accounts as fraudulent.
- 8. On November 12, 1999, staff received an audit report stating that CIO had failed to allow audit staff access to review financial records. On November 15, 1999, all telephone numbers used by staff to contact CIO were disconnected.
- 9. By Proposed Agency Action Order No. PSC-00-0078-PAA-TX, issued January 10, 2000 in Docket No. 990971-TX, the Commission denied CIO's ALEC application. That Order became final by issuance of Consummating Order No. 00-0231-CO-TX, issued February 4, 2000 in Docket No. 990971-TX.

Memorandum to Steve Tribble Docket No. 991664-TX Page 3

Please find the following attached hereto:

- (a) Order No. PSC-00-0072-SC-TX.
- (b) Order No. PSC-00-0078-PAA-TX
- (c) Order No. PSC-00-0231-CO-TX
- (d) State of Florida Office of the Comptroller Bureau of Auditing Delinquent Accounts Receivable Transmittal

Mr. Austin's mailing addresses are:

Mr. Richard Austin C.I.O., Inc. 2350 Commerce Park Drive Palm Bay, Florida 32905-7732; and

Mr. Richard Austin 3150 S. Babcock Street, #K Melbourne, Florida 32901

TV/sa

cc: Division of Records and Reporting

Division of Communications (Biegalski)

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: Initiation of show cause proceedings against Richard Austin for apparent violation of Rule 25-24.805, F.A.C., Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity Required.

DOCKET NO. 991664-TX
ORDER NO. PSC-00-0072-SC-TX
ISSUED: January 7, 2000

The following Commissioners participated in the disposition of this matter:

JOE GARCIA, Chairman J. TERRY DEASON SUSAN F. CLARK E. LEON JACOBS, JR.

ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE

BY THE COMMISSION:

I. Background

In September, 1998, TeleConex, Inc. d/b/a TeleConex (TeleConex), a certificated alternative local exchange company (ALEC), entered into a marketing arrangement with C.I.O., Inc. (C.I.O.). On May 9, 1999, C.I.O. entered into a marketing agreement with Pre-Cell Solutions, Inc. (Pre-Cell), a certificated ALEC.

On May 12, 1999, our Division of Consumer Affairs received a complaint from TeleConex against Pre-Cell regarding Family Phone Company - a.k.a. C.I.O. - indicating that C.I.O. telephoned TeleConex's customers telling them that TeleConex was bankrupt and going out of business. On June 24, 1999, our staff met with TeleConex to discuss the problems they were having with C.I.O.. TeleConex stated that C.I.O. was collecting money from customers on its behalf and not forwarding the monies to TeleConex. In addition, TeleConex alleged that C.I.O. was marketing TeleConex's customers stating that TeleConex was in bankruptcy and it could provide the customers with a less expensive service.

On July 27, 1999, C.I.O. submitted its application for ALEC service in the State of Florida. On July 30, 1999, our staff mailed a letter to C.I.O. stating that it needed to amend its

corporate name, price list and the application. On September 13, 1999, our staff, having received no response from C.I.O. to the July 30, 1999 letter, staff mailed a certified letter to C.I.O. requesting that the amendments be made before September 28, 1999, or staff would recommend denying its application. The letter was signed for and received by C.I.O. on September 16, 1999.

On September 21, 1999, C.I.O. submitted a revised application, along with a request to withdraw its price list and a statement that prior to providing local service, C.I.O. would submit a price list. On September 27, 1999, our staff requested deferral of this docket from the October 5, 1999 Agenda Conference.

On September 28, 1999, Pre-Cell terminated its marketing agreement with C.I.O. for C.I.O.'s failure to remit monies collected from customers for telephone service to Pre-Cell. In October, 1999, our staff began receiving complaints from customers regarding C.I.O. and Pre-Cell.

On October 20, 1999, our Division of Auditing and Financial Analysis provided notice to Mr. Richard Austin, president of C.I.O., informing him of an investigation of financial records. On October 22, 1999, BellSouth provided our staff a list of telephone accounts that were billed to C.I.O. and a list of telephone accounts billed to one account in the name of Richard Austin. A copy of this list is appended to this Order as Attachment A, which by reference, is incorporated herein. BellSouth disconnected all of these accounts as fraudulent.

On November 12, 1999, our staff received an audit report stating that C.I.O. had failed to allow audit staff access to review financial records. On November 15, 1999, all telephone numbers used by our staff to contact C.I.O. were disconnected.

II. Apparent Violation

Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity

Rule 25-24.805(1), Florida Administrative Code, provides in pertinent part:

No person shall provide alternative local exchange telecommunications service without first obtaining a certificate of public convenience and necessity from the Commission.

Our staff became aware of the operations of Mr. Richard Austin on June 24, 1999, through its meeting with TeleConex. TeleConex informed our staff that C.I.O. - a.k.a. Family Phone Company - was representing itself as a telecommunications provider in its solicitation for service. At that time, our staff notified C.I.O. that it needed to obtain a certificate.

On May 9, 1999, C.I.O. entered into an agreement with Pre-Cell, effectively conducting business in the same manner as it had during its relationship with TeleConex. C.I.O. continued representing itself as a telecommunications provider, in addition to not paying Pre-Cell, while marketing and collecting payments for Pre-Cell.

After his relationship with Pre-Cell was terminated, Mr. Austin could no longer obtain local exchange services from BellSouth by ordering it under the name Pre-Cell. alerted BellSouth that C.I.O. did not have a certificate to provide ALEC services in Florida and requested information from BellSouth regarding the number of accounts it may have provisioned for C.I.O. BellSouth's research showed that accounts existed in CIO's name plus Mr. Austin's name. Apparently when Mr. Austin had difficulty convincing a BellSouth representative to establish the account in C.I.O.'s name, he would open an account in his personal name. According to information provided by BellSouth, it appears that Mr. Austin ordered in his own name and received approximately 50 local exchange service accounts for various addresses throughout Florida. Apparently, Mr. Austin would then bill end users residing at the addresses for which he ordered local exchange services. Mr. Austin was reselling local exchange services without having a certificate of public convenience and necessity approved by the Commission. Based on the foregoing, it appears that Mr. Austin is in violation of Rule 25-24.805(1), Florida Administrative Code.

III. Conclusion

Pursuant to Section 364.285, Florida Statutes, we are authorized to impose upon any entity subject to our jurisdiction a penalty of not more than \$25,000 for each offense, if such entity is found to have refused to comply with or to have willfully violated any lawful rule or order of the Commission, or any provision of Chapter 364. Utilities are charged with knowledge of our rules and statutes. Additionally, "[i]t is a common maxim, familiar to all minds, that `ignorance of the law' will not excuse

any person, either civilly or criminally." <u>Barlow v. United</u> <u>States</u>, 32 U.S. 404, 411 (1833).

In Order No. 24306, issued April 1, 1991, in Docket No. 890216-TL, In re: Investigation Into The Proper Application of Rule 25-14.003, F.A.C., Relating To Tax Savings Refund for 1988 and 1989 For GTE Florida, Inc., having found that the company had not intended to violate the rule, we nevertheless found it appropriate to order it to show cause why it should not be fined, stating that "In our view, willful implies intent to do an act, and this is distinct from intent to violate a rule." Thus, any intentional act. such as Mr. Richard Austin's conduct at issue here, would meet the standard for a "willful violation." We find that Mr. Richard Austin's conduct by ordering local exchange telecommunications services in his own name, for addresses he did not occupy or have an affiliation, then separately charging the end users for these services, constitutes the provisioning of ALEC services without a certificate of public convenience and necessity, in apparent violation of Commission Rule 25-24.805, Florida Administrative As such, Mr. Austin's actions have been "willful" in the sense intended by Section 364.285, Florida Statutes.

Accordingly, Mr. Richard Austin shall show cause in writing within 21 days of the issuance of the Commission's Order why he should not be fined \$25,000 for apparent violation of Rule 25-24.805, Florida Administrative Code, Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity Required.

If Mr. Richard Austin timely responds to this Order, this docket shall remain open pending the resolution of the show cause proceeding. Mr. Austin's response shall contain specific allegations of fact or law. If Mr. Austin fails to respond to this Order to Show Cause, the fines shall be deemed assessed. If the fines are not paid within ten business days after this Order becomes final, the fines shall be forwarded to the Office of the Comptroller for collection, and this docket shall be closed administratively.

Any fines received by the Commission shall be forwarded to the State of Florida General Revenue Fund pursuant to Section 364.285, Florida Statutes.

Based on the foregoing, it is

ORDERED by the Florida Public Service Commission that Mr. Richard Austin shall show cause in writing within 21 days of the issuance of this Order why he should not be fined \$25,000 for apparent violation of Rule 25-24.805, Florida Administrative Code, Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity Required. It is further

ORDERED that any response to this Order to Show Cause filed by Mr. Richard Austin shall contain specific allegations of fact or law and shall identify his name and this docket number. It is further

ORDERED that failure by Mr. Richard Austin to respond to this Order to Show Cause in the manner and date set forth in the "Notice of Further Proceedings and Judicial Review" section of this Order shall constitute an admission of the violations described in the body of this Order, waiver of the right to a hearing, and the fines shall be deemed assessed. It is further

ORDERED that in the event Mr. Richard Austin fails to respond to this Order and the fines are not paid within ten business days after this Order becomes final, the fines shall be forwarded to the Office of the Comptroller for collection. It is further

ORDERED that any fines received by the Commission shall be forwarded to the State of Florida General Revenue Fund pursuant to Section 364.285, Florida Statutes. It is further

ORDERED that upon payment of the fines or referral to the Comptroller's Office, this docket shall be closed.

By ORDER of the Florida Public Service Commission this <u>7th</u> day of <u>January</u>, <u>2000</u>.

/s/ Blanca S. Bayó
BLANCA S. BAYÓ, Director
Division of Records and Reporting

This is a facsimile copy. A signed copy of the order may be obtained by calling 1-850-413-6770.

(SEAL)

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NOTICE OF FURTHER PROCEEDINGS OR JUDICIAL REVIEW

The Florida Public Service Commission is required by Section 120.569(1), Florida Statutes, to notify parties of any administrative hearing or judicial review of Commission orders that is available under Sections 120.57 or 120.68, Florida Statutes, as well as the procedures and time limits that apply. This notice should not be construed to mean all requests for an administrative hearing or judicial review will be granted or result in the relief sought.

Mediation may be available on a case-by-case basis. If mediation is conducted, it does not affect a substantially interested person's right to a hearing.

This order is preliminary, procedural or intermediate in nature. Any person whose substantial interests are affected by this show cause order may file a response within 21 days of issuance of the show cause order as set forth herein. This response must be received by the Director, Division of Records and Reporting, 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850, by the close of business on <u>January 28, 2000</u>.

Failure to respond within the time set forth above shall constitute an admission of all facts and a waiver of the right to a hearing and a default pursuant to Rule 28-106.111(4), Florida Administrative Code. Such default shall be effective on the day subsequent to the above date.

If an adversely affected person fails to respond to this order within the time prescribed above, that party may request judicial review by the Florida Supreme Court in the case of any electric, gas or telephone utility or by the First District Court of Appeal in the case of a water or wastewater utility by filing a notice of appeal with the Director, Division of Records and Reporting, and filing a copy of the notice of appeal and the filing fee with the appropriate court. This filing must be completed within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this order, pursuant to Rule 9.110, Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure.

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: Application for certificate to provide alternative local exchange telecommunications service by C.I.O., Inc.

DOCKET NO. 990971-TX
ORDER NO. PSC-00-0078-PAA-TX
ISSUED: January 10, 2000

The following Commissioners participated in the disposition of this matter:

JOE GARCIA, Chairman J. TERRY DEASON SUSAN F. CLARK E. LEON JACOBS, JR.

NOTICE OF PROPOSED AGENCY ACTION ORDER DENYING C.I.O., INC.'S APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE LOCAL EXCHANGE SERVICE

BY THE COMMISSION:

NOTICE is hereby given by the Florida Public Service Commission that the action discussed herein is preliminary in nature and will become final unless a person whose interests are substantially affected files a petition for a formal proceeding, pursuant to Rule 25-22.029, Florida Administrative Code.

On July 27, 1999, C.I.O., Inc. (C.I.O. or company) submitted its application in order to provide alternative local exchange telecommunications service in Florida. After reviewing the application, our staff determined that revisions to the application were necessary. On July 30, 1999, staff mailed a letter to Mr. Rick Austin, President of C.I.O., stating that C.I.O. needed to amend its tariff and corporate filing information and submit an amended application for approval. Since C.I.O. did not respond to this letter, staff mailed a certified letter to C.I.O. on September 13, 1999, and requested receipt of the amended application by September 28, 1999. C.I.O. submitted the required information on September 21, 1999.

Staff placed its recommendation for approval of C.I.O.'s application on the October 5, 1999, Agenda Conference. Prior to

ORDER NO. PSC-00-0078-PAA-TX DOCKET NO. 990971-TX PAGE 2

the agenda date, however, staff began receiving customer complaints concerning C.I.O. Based on the number and substance of the customer complaints, on September 27, 1999, staff requested a deferral of this item in order to further investigate the customer complaints and the company.

Based on the investigation, it appears that C.I.O. collecting payments for telephone service and not forwarding the payments to TeleConex. TeleConex, Inc. d/b/a TeleConex (TeleConex) is a certificated alternative local exchange company (ALEC) that entered into a marketing agreement with C.I.O. in September 1998. In addition, based on staff's discussions with concerned customers, it seems that Mr. Austin solicited many of TeleConex's customers, advising them that if they remained with TeleConex they might lose their telephone service. C.I.O. was alleged to have stated that if the customers switched their service to Pre-Cell they would receive service at a lower rate. Needless to say, many TeleConex customers confused. Mr. Austin succeeded in changing some of TeleConex's customers to Pre-Cell. Pre-Cell Solutions, Inc. (Pre-Cell) is another certificated ALEC that entered into a marketing agreement with C.I.O. in May 1999. Staff began receiving customer complaints regarding C.I.O. and Pre-Cell. It appears that C.I.O. began soliciting customers in order to switch them from Pre-Cell to C. T. O.

Staff contacted C.I.O. and scheduled an audit for October 29, 1999. Prior to that time, Mr. Austin contacted staff and canceled the audit. To date, the audit has not been rescheduled.

In addition, on October 11, 1999, C.I.O. filed for a name change with the Secretary of State to change the name from C.I.O., Inc. to C.I.O.'s Family Phones Inc., but has not filed the same change with us as required by Rule 25-24.815, Florida Administrative Code. Furthermore, the telephone numbers for C.I.O. listed on its application and customer telephone bills have been disconnected.

Based on the above stated information, it appears that C.I.O. has not demonstrated nor do we believe C.I.O. has the managerial capability to operate a telecommunications company in Florida. Thus, we believe granting C.I.O. a certificate would not be in the public interest. Therefore, we deny C.I.O.'s application for certificate to provide alternative local exchange telecommunications service.

ORDER NO. PSC-00-0078-PAA-TX DOCKET NO. 990971-TX PAGE 3

Therefore, it is

ORDERED by the Florida Public Service Commission that C.I.O., Inc.'s application to provide alternative local exchange telecommunications service in Florida is hereby denied. It is further

ORDERED that the provisions of this Order, issued as proposed agency action, shall become final and effective upon the issuance of a Consummating Order unless an appropriate petition, in the form provided by Rule 28-106.201, Florida Administrative Code, is received by the Director, Division of Records and Reporting, 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850, by the close of business on the date set forth in the "Notice of Further Proceedings" attached hereto. It is further

ORDERED that in the event this Order becomes final, this Docket shall be closed.

By ORDER of the Florida Public Service Commission this $\underline{10th}$ day of $\underline{January}$, $\underline{2000}$.

/s/ Blanca S. Bayó
BLANCA S. BAYÓ, Director
Division of Records and Reporting

This is a facsimile copy. A signed copy of the order may be obtained by calling 1-850-413-6770.

(SEAL)

DWC

NOTICE OF FURTHER PROCEEDINGS OR JUDICIAL REVIEW

The Florida Public Service Commission is required by Section 120.569(1), Florida Statutes, to notify parties of any administrative hearing that is available under Section 120.57, Florida Statutes, as well as the procedures and time limits that apply. This notice should not be construed to mean all requests for an administrative hearing will be granted or result in the relief sought.

Mediation may be available on a case-by-case basis. If mediation is conducted, it does not affect a substantially interested person's right to a hearing.

ORDER NO. PSC-00-0078-PAA-TX DOCKET NO. 990971-TX PAGE 4

The action proposed herein is preliminary in nature. Any person whose substantial interests are affected by the action proposed by this order may file a petition for a formal proceeding, in the form provided by Rule 28-106.201, Florida Administrative Code. This petition must be received by the Director, Division of Records and Reporting, 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850, by the close of business on January 31, 2000.

In the absence of such a petition, this order shall become final and effective upon the issuance of a Consummating Order.

Any objection or protest filed in this docket before the issuance date of this order is considered abandoned unless it satisfies the foregoing conditions and is renewed within the specified protest period.

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In re: Application for certificate to provide alternative local exchange telecommunications service by C.I.O., Inc.

DOCKET NO. 990971-TX
ORDER NO. PSC-00-0231-CO-TX
ISSUED: February 4, 2000

CONSUMMATING ORDER

BY THE COMMISSION:

By Order No. PSC-00-0078-PAA-TX, issued January 10, 2000, this Commission proposed to take certain action, subject to a Petition for Formal Proceeding as provided in Rule 25-22.029, Florida Administrative Code. No response has been filed to the order. It is, therefore,

ORDERED by the Florida Public Service Commission that Order No. PSC-00-0078-PAA-TX has become effective and final. It is further

ORDERED that this docket shall be closed.

By ORDER of the Florida Public Service Commission, this $\underline{4th}$ day of $\underline{February}$, $\underline{2000}$.

BLANCA S. BAYÓ, Director Division of Records and Reporting

By: <u>/s/ Kay Flynn</u>
Kay Flynn, Chief
Bureau of Records

This is a facsimile copy. A signed copy of the order may be obtained by calling 1-850-413-6770.

(SEAL) DWC

NOTICE OF FURTHER PROCEEDINGS OR JUDICIAL REVIEW

The Florida Public Service Commission is required by Section 120.569(1), Florida Statutes, to notify parties of any judicial

ORDER NO. PSC-00-0231-CO-TX DOCKET NO. 990971-TX PAGE 2

review of Commission orders that is available pursuant to Section 120.68, Florida Statutes, as well as the procedures and time limits that apply. This notice should not be construed to mean all requests for judicial review will be granted or result in the relief sought.

Any party adversely affected by the Commission's final action in this matter may request judicial review by the Florida Supreme Court in the case of an electric, gas or telephone utility or the First District Court of Appeal in the case of a water and/or wastewater utility by filing a notice of appeal with the Director, Division of Records and Reporting and filing a copy of the notice of appeal and the filing fee with the appropriate court. This filing must be completed within thirty (30) days after the issuance of this order, pursuant to Rule 9.110, Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure. The notice of appeal must be in the form specified in Rule 9.900(a), Florida Rules of Appellate Procedure.

STATE OF FLORIDA OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER BUREAU OF AUDITING DELINQUENT ACCOUNTS RECEIVABLE TRANSMITTAL

(PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE)

DATE: <u>2/22/00</u>

AGENCY: FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

CONTACT: EVELY	/N H. SEW	ELL, CHIEF, B	BUREAU OF FISC	CAL SERVICES	
PHONE NUMBER:	413-6263				
SAMAS ACCOUNT			610000 00 00 610000 00 00		
991664-TX	Richard	l Austin			
AGENCY REFERENCE #	LAST NAME	FIRST	MIDDLE	SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER	COMPTROLLER USE ONLY
2350 Commerce Park Dri 3150 S. Babcock Street, N		orida 32901	T KNOWN ADDRESS (INCLUDE ZIP) \$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
HOME TELEPHONE	•	WORK TELEPHONE	PRINCIPLE AMOUN	T PENALTY/INTERES	FAMOUNT TOTAL
. § 25-24.805, F.A.C.				01/28/00	8
	PENALTY/INTE	REST AUTHORITY		DATE DEBT INCURRED	DEBT TYPE
Show Cause Fine					
		DEBT DESCRIPTION, e.g., DRIV	ER LICENSE, SALARY OVERFAYME	ENT, PROPERTY DAMAGE	
		ADDITIONAL INFORMATIO	ON, e.g., DATE OF BIRTH, DRIVER LI	CENSE NUMBER, ETC.	