

BEFORE THE FLORIDA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In Re: Request for Review of Proposed

Docket 000604-TL

Numbering Plan Relief for the 941

Area Code

PRE-FILED TESTIMONY

OF VIRGINIA J. HALEY

Q. Please state your name and your business address for the record.

A. Virginia J. Haley, Executive Director, Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau, 655 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34236.

Q. By whom are you currently employed?

A. Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Q. What is your position with the Sarasota County Convention and Visitor's Bureau and how long have you held that position?

A. Executive Director – since November 2000.

Q. What are your responsibilities as Executive Director of the Convention and Visitor's Bureau?

A. To ensure the continued growth of tourism and travel to Sarasota County from visitors around the world.

Q. This docket No. 000604-TL is before the Public Service Commission for a determination as to which of four proposed

DOCUMENT NUMBER-DATE

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FPSC-RECORDS/REPORTING

1 relief plans for the 941 Area Code Service Area should be
2 implemented in light of the fact that the 941 Area Code
3 numbers are predicted to exhaust in the first quarter of 2003.
4 The industry recommends an all services distributed overlay
5 relief plan, which would result in all of the current 941 service
6 area having multiple area codes without any relationship to
7 geographical boundaries. As Executive Director of the
8 Sarasota County Convention and Visitor's Bureau, do you
9 have any concerns about a distributed overlay as a proposed
10 relief plan?

11 A. Yes. As a coastal community, Sarasota County relies substantially
12 on tourism for its revenues. Distributed overlays are very difficult
13 for visitors and businesses alike. For example, if a restaurant or
14 attraction has an area code different from the hotel at which a
15 person is staying, the visitor's assumption is that the business is out
16 of the geographical area and, as a result, will call another business
17 within his area code. This is very difficult for new businesses who
18 are struggling to survive. Yet, these are the very businesses that
19 would get the new area code. With respect to tourism, area codes
20 have a geographical significance that translates into dollars for
21 local businesses.

1 **Q. In your opinion, which, if any, of the other proposed**
2 **alternatives would have the least effect on the tourism**
3 **industry?**

4 A. Alternative 4 is the preferred relief plan. It keeps Manatee,
5 Sarasota and Charlotte counties together, splitting the area code
6 service at the Charlotte-Lee County line. It is particularly
7 important to keep Sarasota, Manatee and Charlotte together
8 because just recently, as a result of their community of interests,
9 these three counties were realigned for tourism promotional
10 purposes into the Southwest Florida District as a means of
11 promoting tourism on a regional basis. This joint, regional
12 approach is particularly important in the international markets.

13 **Q. Are you particularly opposed to either Alternative #2, which**
14 **splits the City of Punta Gorda from the rest of Charlotte**
15 **County or Alternative #3, which splits the Englewood**
16 **community from Sarasota County.**

17 A. Neither of these alternatives is acceptable from a tourism
18 perspective for the same reasons that a distributed overlay is
19 unacceptable. Imposing a new area code on a section of a county
20 gives the perception that the split-off area is out of the
21 geographical area. Visitors are not likely to call outside their area
22 code, even if that area code boundary is a mile away. This is true
23 because they simply do not know where the area code boundary

1 lies. It is very confusing for visitors and puts new businesses in the
2 split-off area code at a huge disadvantage.

3 **Q. Does this conclude your testimony?**

4 **A. Yes, it does.**

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE
DOCKET NO. 000604-TL**

I HEREBY CERTIFY that a true and correct copy of the foregoing was served by U.S. Mail this 1st day of February, 2001 to the following:

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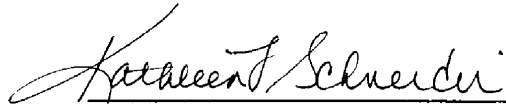
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A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kathleen F. Schneider". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Kathleen F. Schneider, Esq.
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