

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office

March 1, 2000

LB 1285

SENATOR MATZKE: Mr. President and members of the Legislature, I think some of the discussion is somewhat, I hate to use the word "misleading" but at least confusing to the membership. There's all of this conversation about anticompetitive companies, a misbehaving company, a wrongdoer, as if we have someone wearing a black hat and someone wearing a white hat, and that's not really the situation. Accurately, what you got here is a competitive clash between the long distance carriers and those companies that supply local telephone service. It's a highly competitive, but it's also a very complex technical issue, and so when the commission makes a decision, the decision could be, on the one hand, I mean you could have A T & T versus US West, or you could have any other array of long distance carriers against local carriers. And the commission makes a decision which it will make in what it considers the best interests of the public, but it isn't the public versus a anticompetitive company or a misbehaving company or a wrongdoer. What you've got is, I think, if we're going to be honest about it, you've got gigantic corporations trying to get into each other's pickle patch. Each one that has long distance services wants to get into the pickle patch of the local carriers, and the local companies want to get into the pickle patch of the long distance carriers. And you've got giants fighting giants, and we put the Public Service Commission right in the middle with a tremendous responsibility to try and protect the interest of the public as Senator Chambers has mentioned. But it isn't the public versus one company. I guess one of the things that I think is very misleading to this body is the handout today in which the Public Service Commission tries to paint US West as the company wearing the black hat. That could just as easily be MCI or A T & T or WorldCom or any of the other major companies. I guess I am appalled that they would issue a statement on their letterhead as if this was class legislation against one company, when it could easily be against any of the other companies. Now, having said that, let's expand the whole issue to the array of who these penalties could be assessed against. This bill refers to universal...refers to a commission order entered pursuant to such and such and involving the Universal Service Fund. Well, we have about 40 telephone companies in this state. It used to be 42. It may be 38. I don't know how many. Many of those are very small companies. I have a very small company and only a