

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
OF THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

In the matter of the tariff filing of)	
Southwestern Bell Telephone, L.P.)	Case No. TT-2003-0312
d/b/a SBC Missouri concerning the)	Tariff No. JI-2003-1528
payment of late fees on disputed charges.)	

**SBC MISSOURI'S
RESPONSE TO OPC'S MOTION TO REJECT TARIFF**

SBC Missouri¹ respectfully opposes Office of the Public Counsel's ("OPC's") March 3, 2003 Motion to Reject Tariff, or in the Alternative, to Suspend.

OPC misunderstands SBC Missouri proposed tariff change. OPC mistakenly claims that:

This tariff does not afford the ratepayer adequate protection from billing errors and is not in the public interest because it places an undue obligation on the customer to pay late charges on the disputed charges on the residential and business customers bill.²

OPC has it just the opposite. The proposed tariff allows SBC to exempt the disputed charge from the late payment charge until the dispute is resolved. Currently, the tariff language states: "When the balance carried over is in dispute, the Late Payment Charge will be applied and adjusted later, if appropriate, based on the resolution of the claim."³ The proposed tariff changes the word "will" to "may" and adds another short paragraph explaining SBC's intent to give SBC the ability to exempt such charges when a customer calls in to acquire about his or her bill: "Where possible, the Company will exempt the disputed portion of the bill from Late Payment Charges until the claim is resolved. If the claim is resolved in favor of the Company,

¹ Southwestern Bell Telephone, L.P., d/b/a SBC Missouri, will be referred to in this pleading as "SBC Missouri."

² OPC Motion to Reject Tariff, p. 1.

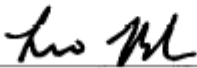
³ SBC Missouri General Exchange Tariff, Section 17.6.1(A), 6th Revised Sheet 12.01 (emphasis added). The language in the business tariff is similar.

the Late Payment Charge will be applied if appropriate.” SBC does not propose any other change in how it handles billing disputes.

SBC Missouri proposes this change to benefit customers and respectfully requests the Commission to allow it to go into effect as filed.

Respectfully submitted,

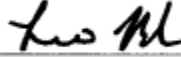
SOUTHWESTERN BELL TELEPHONE, L.P.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

Copies of this document were served on the following parties by e-mail on March 4, 2003.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leo J. Bub", is written over a horizontal line.

Leo J. Bub

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