

LAW OFFICES  
**RITER, ROGERS, WATTIER & BROWN, LLP**

Professional & Executive Building

319 South Coteau Street

P.O. Box 280

Pierre, South Dakota 57501-0280

[www.riterlaw.com](http://www.riterlaw.com)

TELEPHONE

605-224-5825

FAX

605-224-7102

OF COUNSEL:

Robert D. Hofer

E. D. Mayer

ROBERT C. RITER, Jr.  
DARLA POLLMAN ROGERS  
JERRY L. WATTIER  
JOHN L. BROWN

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MARGO D. NORTHRUP, Associate

May 29, 2007

Ms. Patricia Van Gerpen  
SD Public Utilities Commission  
500 E. Capitol  
Pierre, SD 57501

Re: Certification regarding Use of Federal Universal Service Support

Dear Patty:

Enclosed herewith for filing please find the following Annual ETC Certification Filing for Western Telephone Company.

Sincerely yours,

RITER, ROGERS, WATTIER & BROWN, LLP

By: 

Darla Pollman Rogers

DPR-wb

Enclosure

**BEFORE THE  
SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

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<b>IN THE MATTER OF THE REQUEST OF ) WESTERN TELEPHONE COMPANY FOR ) CERTIFICATION REGARDING ITS USE ) OF FEDERAL UNIVERSAL SERVICE ) SUPPORT. )</b>	<b>ANNUAL ETC CERTIFICATION FILING</b>
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Western Telephone Company (the "Company"), by and through its attorney, makes this filing to seek certification from the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission (the "Commission") as is required under 47 C.F.R. § 54.314 and to comply with the provisions of ARSD §§ 20:10:32:52 and 20:10:32:54 of the Commission's rules pertaining to eligible telecommunications carriers ("ETCs").

In accordance with 47 C.F.R. § 54.314, federal universal service support provided to carriers pursuant to 47 C.F.R. §§ 54.301, 54.305 and/or 54.307 and/or Part 36, Subpart F (high-cost loop support, local switching support, safety net additive support and safety valve support) will be made available only if the State Commission files the requisite annual certification with the FCC and USAC. The certification required specifically for rural carriers to receive federal universal service support for all four quarters during calendar year 2008 is currently due to be filed with the FCC and USAC on or before October 1, 2007. The certification may be presented to these entities in the form of a letter from the State Commission. The letter must identify which carriers in the State are eligible to receive federal support during the 12-month period and must certify that the carriers listed will only use the support for the provision, maintenance and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended.

As part of its annual request to the Commission for certification, the Company provides the following information:

1. The Company is a rural telephone company that has previously been designated by this Commission as an ETC. The Company provides local exchange telephone services, including all of the essential services that are included in the federal definition of universal service, to approximately 1,075 access lines within its established rural service area in South Dakota.

2. The provisions of ARSD § 20:10:32:54 addressing the annual "Certification requirements" set forth by this Commission indicate in part that the ETC must show "how much universal service support was received." Accordingly, attached hereto as "Exhibit A" is information indicating "Year 2006 Federal Universal Service Receipts" received by the Company. This same Exhibit also shows total expenditures of the Company in 2006 related to the provision, maintenance and upgrading of the facilities and services that are supported by Federal Universal Service Funding and further estimates these same expenditures for calendar year 2008. Consistent with federal universal service principles, the Company will use federal universal service amounts received in 2008 to offset a portion of these 2008 expenditures. This use of federal universal service support will enable the Company to: (1) maintain rates for its

local exchange services that are affordable and reasonably comparable to rates being charged for the same services in urban areas; and (2) to upgrade its telecommunications facilities and equipment as necessary to meet evolving service requirements and maintain high quality service. The use of federal universal service support for these purposes is clearly consistent with the federal universal service provisions.

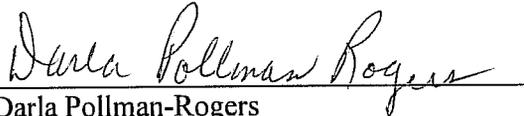
3. In addition to the information included in Exhibit A, the following information is provided to meet the Commission's "Certification requirements" set forth in 20:10:32:54:

- The Company's service quality improvement plan is to continue to upgrade its telecommunications facilities and equipment as necessary to meet evolving service requirements and maintain high quality service throughout its service area. As an incumbent local exchange carrier and the carrier of last resort in its service area, the Company upgrades and replaces facilities and equipment as necessary. The Company believes that its planned capital additions will improve the reliability of switched calls for its customers, increase the Company's network capacity to serve remote customers and provide customers with state-of-the-art telecommunications service. In furtherance of its service quality improvement plan, the Company will use any high-cost universal service amounts received by it to offset expenditures incurred as it continues to upgrade and replace facilities and equipment. A progress report on the Company's two-year service quality improvement plan, required under the provisions of ARSD 20:10:32:54, is attached hereto as "Exhibit B."
- During calendar year 2006, the Company experienced the following service outages affecting at least 10 percent of its end user customers, for a period lasting longer than 30 minutes: On January 18, 2006, due to an ice storm and downed power lines, the Faulkton central office experienced an outage lasting for about five hours. The only service affected was toll. All of the Company's customers were affected. The Company bought a new, larger capacity generator and a new battery system to prevent a similar situation in the future.
- The Company was able to provide service to all potential customers that requested service during 2006, and as of December 31, 2006, the Company had no unfulfilled requests for service.
- During 2006, the Company's customer service department received an estimated zero complaints from consumers. None of these complaints were received by the Company more formally as written complaints or as complaints that needed to be resolved with the involvement of other Company representatives outside of the customer service department.
- Also attached as "Exhibit C" is a document containing other certifications, including those required under the provisions of ARSD §§ 20:10:32:54(5), 20:10:32:54(6), 20:10:32:54(7) and 20:10:32:54(8).

4. Based on all of the foregoing information, including the information provided on Exhibits A, B and C, the Company requests that this Commission issue an appropriate certification to the FCC and USAC indicating that Western Telephone Company is in compliance with 47 U.S.C. § 254(e) and should receive all federal universal service support determined for distribution to the Company in 2008. In order to ensure that this certification is issued to the FCC prior to October 1, 2007, the Company would further ask the Commission to expedite the process that is initiated based on this filing.

Dated this 29<sup>th</sup> day of May 2007.

Respectfully submitted,



Darla Pollman-Rogers  
Of RITER, ROGERS, WATTIER & BROWN, LLP  
P.O. Box 280  
319 South Coteau  
Pierre, South Dakota 57501  
Phone: 605-224-5825  
Fax: 605-224-7102

Attorneys for Western Telephone Company