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PRESIDING OFFICER'S
RULING NO. MC98-1/15

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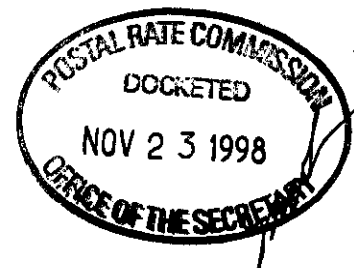
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
POSTAL RATE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20268-0001

Mailing Online Service

Docket No. MC98-1

PRESIDING OFFICER'S RULING
ALLOWING COMMENTS ON POSTAL SERVICE
NOTICE AND EXTENDING THE DATE FOR
THE FILING OF TESTIMONY

(November 23, 1998)



During the November 18, 1998 hearing, counsel for the Postal Service announced that it had determined to provide Mailing Online using a system that differs by an order of magnitude from the system described in its direct testimony. Tr. 5/1026. The Postal Service agreed to inform the Commission by November 20, 1998 of when information describing the details and costs of the system expected to be utilized during the experiment could be provided. On November 20, 1998, it provided a Notice of United States Postal Service Regarding Expected Filing Date for Supplemental Testimony.

The Postal Service has informed the Commission that the evolution of the Mailing Online system has rendered its projections and estimates related to both hardware and software outdated. The architecture of the Mailing Online system that will be used during the nationwide experiment is now being redefined by system developers, and the Postal Service expects to provide supplemental testimony regarding the hardware and software costs for Mailing Online on or before January 14, 1999.

When the prospect of revisions to the Mailing Online system was mentioned during hearings, counsel for Pitney Bowes expressed concern that this might impact the

current procedural schedule for this case. *Id.* at 1025. The cases-in-chief of participants other than the Postal Service, including rebuttal to the Postal Service, are to be filed by December 4, 1998. It may be neither efficient nor fair to expect participants to submit rebuttal testimony concerning a system undergoing significant changes.

The Postal Service recognizes that some adjustment in the procedural schedule may be necessary, and it has indicated it will provide suggestions by November 24, 1998. The views of other participants are also germane, and participants may provide alternative suggestions on or before November 30, 1998.

While this issue is pending, it appears unreasonable to expect participants to complete and submit their direct and rebuttal testimony. The filing of the case-in-chief of participants other than the Postal Service will be delayed beyond December 4, 1998. No specific new procedural dates will be established pending the receipt of participant comments.

RULING

1. Participants may provide suggestions for modifying the procedural schedule to accommodate Postal Service supplemental testimony on or before November 30, 1998.

2. The date for the filing of the case-in-chief of participants other than the Postal Service will be delayed beyond December 4, 1998. No specific date is established, pending the receipt of participant comments.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W.H. LeBlanc III', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

W.H. "Trey" LeBlanc III
Presiding Officer