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NEWS RELEASE

City Leaders Ask BellSouth and Cox to Drop Lawsuit

February 7, 2005 Lafayette, LA, With the Fiber 411 petition against Lafayette's Fiber for the Future project ruled invalid by the Lafayette Registrar of Voters last week, city leaders have formally issued a request that BellSouth and Cox withdraw the current lawsuit against the City of Lafayette and the Lafayette Public Utilities Authority.

BellSouth filed the lawsuit on behalf of the Fiber 411 petitioners in order to obtain a ruling that would authenticate the legality of the Fiber 411 petition. "Now that the petition is dead, we believe that if BellSouth and Cox are good corporate citizens of Lafayette, they should withdraw this lawsuit," said City Parish President Joey Durel.

City leaders contend that this lawsuit is against the people of Lafayette and only serves the purposes of corporate officials in Atlanta. "We are offended by their continued tactics to try and block the future of our community with their profit-driven motives. If they continue with this suit, it will be for no other reason than to delay our project," Durel said.

"If they continue, this lawsuit will likely delay the project by at least three months and cost the people of Lafayette thousands of dollars in legal fees," said Terry Huval, Director of Lafayette Utilities System (LUS). He continues to assert that while interest rates for bonds are favorable now, the delay could cost additional dollars as rates may increase.

This is the second time that Bellsouth and Cox have delayed the project, which was stalled early last year with action in the Louisiana legislature. "If we had been allowed

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to proceed with this project from day one without interference from BellSouth and Cox, we project that we would have been serving our first customers with much lower cost services by July of this year," said Huval. "The people of Lafayette are the losers and the corporate executives of these big Atlanta based companies are the winners as they continue to battle the citizens of Lafayette in blocking this project," he stated.

The lawsuit and the petition drive are both tactics that have been used by the telecom companies in other communities. "It is clear that BellSouth has been the guiding force behind this petition drive since the beginning and now that it has failed they are using legal action to try to intimidate the citizens of our community," said Huval. "It is a shame to learn that the corporate greed of these companies will stop at nothing to prevent our Fiber plan from succeeding. The continued attacks by these private companies only serves to reinforce our ongoing belief in the overall viability of the project," he added.

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