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**STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
UTILITIES COMMISSION  
RALEIGH**

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N.C. Utilities Commission

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**NEWS RELEASE**

FOR RELEASE: April 21, 2004

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**UTILITIES COMMISSION ANNOUNCES STUDY OF LOCAL  
TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPETITION IN NORTH CAROLINA**

The North Carolina Utilities Commission has initiated an independent study of the status of telecommunications competition within the State of North Carolina. This study is part of the Commission's on-going evaluation of competition for local telephone service in the State. The study will survey incumbent local exchange carriers, competitive local providers, and other organizations actually or potentially providing alternatives to traditional voice and data services, such as wireless and "voice over internet protocol" services.

"In fulfilling our statutory obligations and in working with other policymakers at both the state and federal levels, it is vital that the Commission have an accurate understanding of the competitive environment in North Carolina," said Jo Anne Sanford, Chair of the Commission. "With this independent study, we hope to better understand the relevant facts and circumstances concerning competition in our State. Once we have this information, the Commission will be better positioned to make sound legal, economic, and policy judgments in fulfillment of our various responsibilities."

The Commission will engage Research Triangle Institute (RTI) as an independent consultant to perform the study and anticipates its completion by mid-October of this year. RTI is an international consulting firm based in the Research Triangle Park.