



NEWS

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20554

News Media Information 202 / 418-0500
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>
TTY: 1-888-835-5322

This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See *MCI v. FCC*, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
August 9, 2013

NEWS MEDIA CONTACT:
Mark Wigfield, 202-418-0253
E-mail: Mark.Wigfield@fcc.gov

FCC BARS HIGH RATES FOR LONG DISTANCE PHONE CALLS IN JAILS AND PRISONS NATIONWIDE

Reforms Bring Relief to Millions of Families By Reducing the Cost of Interstate Long-Distance Calls

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Communications Commission today took long-overdue steps to ensure that the rates for interstate long-distance calls made by prison inmates are just, reasonable and fair.

Studies make clear that inmates who maintain contact with family and community while in prison have reduced rate of recidivism and are more likely to become productive citizens upon their release. Lower rates of recidivism also benefit society by reducing crime, the need for additional prisons, and other costs.

In addition, an estimated 2.7 million children would benefit from increased communication with an incarcerated parent. Many of these children face challenges that are manifested in higher rates of truancy, homelessness, depression and other ills

But the exorbitant price of interstate long-distance calls from correctional facilities today actually *discourages* such communication because it is too expensive (over \$17 for one 15-minute call), particularly for families facing economic hardship. The Order takes immediate action to change this and provide an affordable means to *encourage* such communication.

The Commission's reforms adopt a simple and balanced approach that protects security and public safety needs, ensures providers receive fair compensation while providing reasonable rates to consumers as follows:

- Requires that all interstate inmate calling rates, including ancillary charges, be based on the cost of providing the inmate calling service
- Provides immediate relief to exorbitant rates:
 - Adopts an interim rate cap of \$0.21 per minute for debit and pre-paid calls and \$0.25 per minute for collect calls, dramatically decreasing rates of over \$17 for a 15-minute call to no more than \$3.75 or \$3.15 a call
 - Presumes that rates of \$0.12 per minute for debit and prepaid calls (\$1.80 for a 15-minute call) and \$0.14 cents per minute for collect calls (\$2.10 for a 15-minute call) are just, reasonable and cost-based (safe-harbor rates)
 - These rates include the costs of modern security features such as advanced mechanisms that block calls to victims, witnesses, prosecutors and other prohibited parties; biometric

caller verification; real-time recording systems; and monitoring to prevent evasion of restrictions on call-forwarding or three-way calling

- Concludes that “site commissions” payments from providers to correctional facilities may not be included in any interstate rate or charge
- Clarifies that inmates or their loved ones who use Telecommunications Relay Services because of hearing and speech disabilities may not be charged higher rates
- Requires a mandatory data collection, annual certification requirement, and enforcement provisions to ensure compliance with this Order
- Seeks comment on reforming rates and practices affecting calls within a state
- Seeks comment on fostering competition to reduce rates

Building on state reforms, the Commission’s action addresses a petition filed nearly a decade ago by Martha Wright, a Washington, D.C. grandmother who sought relief from exorbitant inmate calling rates. Since then, tens of thousands have urged the FCC to make it possible for them to stay in touch with loved ones in jail.

Action by the Commission August 9, 2013, by Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 13-113). Acting Chairwoman Clyburn and Commissioner Rosenworcel with Commissioner Pai dissenting. Acting Chairwoman Clyburn, Commissioners Rosenworcel and Pai issuing statements.

Staff contact: Lynne Engledow at 202-418-1520 or lynne.engledow@fcc.gov

-FCC-

News about the Federal Communications Commission can also be found
on the Commission’s web site www.fcc.gov.