

FCC CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Recommendation Regarding Affordable Phone Access for Incarcerated Individuals and Families

Whereas telephones and phone calls are a vital part of our communications system;

Whereas, the prices for telephone calls from incarcerated individuals to their families, friends, and professionals who serve them, may be unreasonably high and unaffordable; and

Whereas these excessive rates deter regular telephone contact, challenging a national goal of the reduction of recidivism among inmates;

Whereas phone calls are a critical part of the reentry process as maintaining strong family and community connections help inmates prepare for parole, coordinate their legal defense, find housing and secure employment;

Whereas, most inmate calling arrangements require calls to be made as collect calls, which are paid by the family and friends of the inmate, thus burdening those persons who are not incarcerated; and

Whereas, the problem is national in scope and the FCC has failed to take action,

Therefore be it resolved that the FCC Consumer Advisory Committee urges the Federal Communications Commission:

1. Ensure that the price of calls from inmates are reasonable
2. Restrict “commissions” paid by telephone companies to correctional institutions to a reasonable amount above the actual cost of providing the service
3. Encourage the use of prepaid debit accounts for inmates whereby inmates or their called parties may buy low-cost minutes, and
4. Continue to allow collect calls from inmates with charges that are a reasonable amount above the actual cost of providing the call.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that as the only agency with jurisdiction over long distance rates, the Federal Communications Commission is the correct venue to resolve this problem.

Adopted: September 21, 2012

Abstentions: Coleman Institute for cognitive Disabilities, CTIA the Wireless Association, NCTA, Time Warner Cable, T-Mobile, Verizon

Respectfully Submitted:

Debra R. Berlyn, Chairperson
FCC Consumer Advisory Committee