



Illinois Campaign for Telephone Justice

The objective of this petition is to call attention to the exorbitant and often prohibitive costs of prison phone calls in Illinois.

The contract to provide telephone service to all Illinois prisons was awarded to Consolidated Public Services, a division of Consolidated Communications, Inc. Intrastate rates vary according to how far the recipient of the collect call is from the prison initiating the call. They can be as high as 26 cents per minute plus a surcharge (commonly referred to as a connection fee) of up to \$2.50 per call. Out-of-state rates are 89 cents per minute with a \$3.95 surcharge (connection fee).

The IDOC insists that the high rates are necessary in order to maintain monitoring and security of all phone calls. However, federal prisons, who must also monitor phone calls and maintain high levels of security, provide federal inmates with an 800-number that costs only 7 cents per minute with no surcharge. Some states use prepaid phone cards to reduce the cost. It is possible to significantly reduce the cost of prison telephone calls.

The state receives a kickback commission from Consolidated that amounts to millions of dollars per year. These funds are then considered to be income by the state and are used in various ways. Because other states use these funds as a means to provide goods and services for inmates it is logical to assume that Illinois does likewise. Such goods and services are rightly the responsibility of the state, and not the burden of inmates or their family members.

This system is tantamount to imposing a high and unlegislated tax upon families and friends of inmates. Individuals who themselves have done nothing wrong and are in many cases already enduring economic hardship in supporting their inmates' legal needs, medical needs, and commissary needs are forced to bear yet another outrageous financial burden in paying for inflated telephone rates. In doing so, they are sharing their loved one's punishment unjustifiably.

The inflated telephone service rates are 6-18 times higher than the going market rate. Illinois has one of the highest prison telephone call rates in the country. This despite abundant evidence that inmates who maintain stable relationships with their family members and friends on the outside have a greater chance for success upon their release, and lower rates of recidivism. Yet, increasingly, Illinois inmates are sent to prisons hundreds of miles away from their families making visits difficult and expensive at best. Additionally, under-utilized and/or mismanaged staffing in prison mailrooms has created extreme delays of 10-21 days in delivering incoming mail. Thus, an inmate relies heavily upon telephone calls to keep in contact with his loved ones.

Inmate families are statistically among the most economically challenged in the state. They struggle to pay phone bills that can add up to hundreds of dollars each month. If they fail to pay their bill exactly by the due date, they risk disconnection and further alienation from their inmates.

We are asking that the Illinois legislature take immediate action to stop the state from receiving kickback commission from the contractual prison telephone service provider (currently, Consolidated Public Services, a division of Consolidated Communications, Inc.). Additionally, we are asking the Illinois legislature to take immediate action to implement and provide a fair and equitable phone service to Illinois prison inmates and their families similar to the one used by federal prisons.

Stop the extortion NOW!

Illinois Prison Talk

www.illinoisprisonstalk.com

Sign the Petition

