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William David Linley

"PHONE JUSTICE"

I have two (2) young children, ages 6 and 9. It is now more than 5 years that I have been incarcerated. Obviously they are too young to actually correspond by mail with me. In 5 years I have only received 10 letters which consisted of a child's crayon drawings and a few words written in a child's hand.

For the first 3 years I wrote a letter to each child, and my wife, once a week even though I received no response 99 percent of the time. That's over 500 letters with barely 5 or 10 actual letter responses.

The phone is our only real communication and way to connect as a family.

I received 10 visits a year and that has dropped to 3 since last year. Each visit cost \$60.00 and 12 hours of driving time. During inclement weather it requires an additional 40-60 dollars for a hotel overnight.

About 18 months ago my wife filed for divorce. While this is not uncommon during long prison sentences I know that having a very limited, and restricted, and frustrating phone communication system directly contributed to an already stressed relationship which

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finally resulted in divorce. The reality is that after 3 years of little real communication I no longer knew my wife. She had become more an acquaintance.

On the average we spoke on the phone once a week for 30 minutes. A number of times we went for 2-3 months without any phone communications because we had no money available to pay the phone account.

Since the beginning we estimated that each call of 30 minutes costs us \$10.⁰⁰. The charges begin at more than \$3.⁰⁰ for the first minute and 20-30 cents each minute after.

Fees - The greatest aggravation is the "deposit" or "admin" fee charged each time money is placed on the account. The first 2 years (2006 - 2008) it was \$6.00. It has since been lowered to \$3.⁰⁰.

So if I averaged one call a week we have spent \$480.- a year for a total of \$2,400.- dollars in 5 years. Above that cost is \$360.⁰⁰ dollars of admin fees in 5 years for nothing more than using a credit card to make a deposit on an existing account. I am one person in an 2000 man facility. There are 24 prisons in Illinois. If only half the men are paying a similar fee that amounts to \$36,000 dollars in just admin fees for just this prison over the last 5 years.

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Here is an additional kick in the gut. This phone company... (Illinois Consolidated Billing) - Mail: C.C.P.S., P.O. Box 7001, Matteson, Illinois 61938

... also will charge a "low balance fee". So a family on a fixed budget, scraping by, may only be able to deposit \$2.5 or \$5.00 each month on a pay day. Up front they take \$3.00 for deposit fee and when your balance drops low (i.e. 16 cents) they hit you with another fee.

Statements: There are no paper monthly statements for you to track costs and fees. Nor is there an electronic (e.g. on-line or email) statement available.

VoIP: The final issue; The current phone system in use throughout Illinois State buildings is VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol). It's a digital packet system using fiber optics and computer servers. Most people in the U.S.A. are familiar with a simple monthly fee for unlimited access and calling, offered by cell, Telco (DSL) and VoIP providers (Vonage, Callvantage).

So VoIP phone service should be free and unlimited with a fair and balanced monthly account fee of 30-50 dollars.

I know this because I am a Telecom Engineer of over 25 years. And in 2005-2006 I was a Consultant which upgraded the entire Illinois (State Government) phone network to VoIP.

Wm D. Conley