

Phone Justice

We have been asked to write about the high cost of phone calls that our families must pay in order to receive our calls and stay in communication. I can only attest to the conditions in California, which have gotten better but are still highly restrictive. In this current culture that has seen cellphones replace the house phone and texting and e-mail replace the written letter, staying in touch with family members has proven to be difficult at best. The phone system that California has contracted with will not allow calls to go directly to cell phones unless the receiving party has previously set up an account. The reality of this arrangement is those prearranged contracts come with a higher profit margin than if a call went through directly. Because of this, I can no longer talk to my wife or daughters who have no landline. The cost for a work around proved to be too expensive and my wife had to cancel the service.

This penalizes our family members instead of us. We are in prison for the commission of various crimes and are serving the allotted time accordingly. However, our families have not been sentenced along with us and should have no other burden to bear than us being in here. To absorb a significant increase of their budget just to stay in touch should be criminal on the part of the State. The solution is simple, allow phone cards to be sold to the inmate population so that we bear the burden of cost and allow all non-tollfree numbers to be contacted. They can still monitor, record, and restrict access to those that abuse the system. Nothing deters them in this but the loss of profit.