

To whom it may concern,

Please reject the telephone company proposals to impose a per minute (or any other) charge for Internet service. Any such charges will make it prohibitively expensive for many, including myself, to access and enjoy the Internet. Such fees will also harm online Business and Commerce by reducing the amount of time consumers can spend shopping on the Internet. In addition, there will be a reduction in spending dollars that consumers will have available for online and offline shopping because they will be paying more of their economy fueling disposable income to the telephone companies. Also, how will schools afford to pay these fees? Through tax hikes, which further reduces consumer spending? Another area that will be harmed is education and availability of knowledge for all. Many adults and children utilize the Internet and its vast resources to learn more about topics that they are interested in and may have a limited knowledge of. I have used the Internet dozens of times looking up information and expand my knowledge base on scientific topics and other areas that interest me. The Usenet is a tool on the Internet for people to share their knowledge, on a wide variety of topics, with others. I have spent hours searching the Internet for information on consumer goods that I have decided to purchase, but needed to learn more about the product so I could make an informed decision of what to buy and where to buy it. If a consumer gouging charge such as this is allowed, many people won't be able to afford to spend the necessary time to carry out the above described tasks.

Finally, the telephone companies continue to post huge profits that are into the Billions of dollars year after year. The motivation of these companies is a senseless and irresponsible level of greed. Telephone companies alone would benefit from such charges. Whereas, the entire economy benefits when the Internet is an inexpensive gateway for consumers to search, shop, and order products from every sector of the consumer goods industry. Charges such as this one are discriminatory in nature, because they discriminate against people with lesser incomes by allowing only those of higher incomes to enjoy the resources of the Internet. Many who can afford the average \$20 a month access fee can not afford to pay an additional per minute charge for every single minute of usage. Therefore, this proposal for per minute charges for Internet service must be totally and unequivocally rejected along with any other such proposal.

Thank you,
Marshall G. Smith