



# MALDEF

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

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December 1, 2004

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Chairman Michael Powell  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

**RE: WC Docket No. 03-133**

**Chicago**

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Dear Chairman Powell:

While the economic expansion of Latino population in the U.S. continues at a steady pace and is rising along with *per capita* buying power, there remains a disproportionate part of the community that struggles economically. During a time in which outside economic factors have forced up the prices of staple goods, the last thing the FCC should do is force price increases on pre-paid calling card users, which would result from new charges and fees being considered by the Commission.

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MALDEF's mission is to foster sound policies to safeguard the civil rights of the 40 million Latinos living in the United States and empower full participation by the Latino community. As Congress has recognized in its telecommunications policies, one of the most basic ways to ensure civic participation is access to basic communications service. Imposing unneeded and unfair regulatory fees on calling cards would place these telephone services further out of reach for those who can least afford higher telephone bills.

**Sacramento**

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The use of pre-paid cards is quite common among Latinos; nearly 45% of households report using them on a regular basis. Among low-income earners, the cards are even more essential – half of households with fewer than \$20,000 in annual income have used them. This is no surprise, given the low per-minute rates for long distance and international calls as well as the flexibility to buy minutes in affordable amounts.

**Houston**

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When contrasted with the fixed monthly bills and hefty start-up costs that accompany landline and wireless phones, it's no wonder that so many Latinos rely on pre-paid calling cards to keep in touch with friends and family members. New fees on calling cards would greatly add to the economic burden, and erect unfair barriers, for the many low income Latinos who are trying to stay connected with their communities.

*Celebrating Our 36<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*  
*Protecting and Promoting Latino Civil Rights*  
www.maldef.org

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The regressive effects that new pre-paid calling card charges would have on lower income citizens, particularly those within the Latino community, should be reason enough for the FCC to stop any action to impose new fees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ann Marie Tallman". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

**ANN MARIE TALLMAN**  
President & General Counsel

ccs: Commissioner Michael Copps  
Commissioner Kathleen Abernathy  
Commissioner Kevin Martin  
Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein