

My husband is in an Alabama prison. For local calls the rate is \$3.35 for 15 minutes through Global Tel Link. I have him call every day so I know if he is safe. In addition, we are in the middle of bringing his case back to court and often it takes 2 calls to get information exchanged. The connection from Global Tel Link is absolutely horrible, low class and like speaking by a 2-way radio where there is a lot static on the line with every single call. The voices break up like being in a bad cell phone area where there is no tower. The only thing that comes through loud and clear is the prison telephone system recording that reminds that you are receiving a call from a prison inmate. Often the calls are cut off and he has to call back so my phone bill averages \$200 per month for local calls (there is no such thing as a credit on the bill for dropped calls).

What they are doing is called extortion! Consumers do not have a choice of carriers. They cannot shop around for decent service and price. It's either the Department of Correction's carrier or no contact at all with your loved one except by regular mail which often takes 1-2 weeks to reach me. This is unacceptable. A lot can happen in 1-2 weeks inside the prison.

Bottom line is that I pay an exorbitant cost for extremely low quality service and there's nothing I can do about. This is blackmail and extortion, and that's not right or honest.

These unfair practices and outrageous telephone rates are directed to only one class of people: those who are in contact with prison inmates. Extortion is indeed against the law. This is what they are doing every day to this class of people: practicing extortion with impunity and calling it "security". Security is not the issue. Inmates cannot make calls unless the person they are calling is on their call list which must be approved in advance by Prison Officials. In Alabama the inmate can only revise his call list every 3-6 months, depending on the rules at a particular facility, which vary widely. Meanwhile the Department of Corrections pockets the kickbacks from the telephone provider. When they go out for bid, they do not take the lowest bidder; rather they take the bidder that offers the highest kickback.

Obviously this is not good public policy. It benefits no one except the DOC.

Sincerely,
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