



WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
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May 1, 2013

Received & Inspected

Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

MAY 06 2013

FCC Mail Room

RE: RATES FOR INTERSTATE INMATE CALLING SERVICES, WC DOCKET NO. 12-375

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On behalf of the NAACP, our nation's oldest, largest and most widely-recognized grassroots-based civil rights organization, I am writing to express our organization's strong support for the Federal Communication Commission's proposed rule which would ensure that charges for interstate inmate calling services are fair, non-predatory, and reasonable. For too many prisoners and their families, the existing predatory rates are prohibitive and result in prisoners' losing touch with families and support networks which are key components to successful rehabilitation and reentry.

The NAACP has a clear and definitive stake in this debate. Currently, racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately treated more harshly and more often by our Nation's criminal justice system. As a result, racial and ethnic minorities, and specifically African Americans, are vastly over-represented among the prison population. More than 60% of the people in prison are now racial and ethnic minorities. For African American males in their thirties, 1 in every 10 is in prison or jail on any given day. And although African Americans are just under 14% of the overall population, we are over 40% of our nation's current prison population. These trends have been intensified by the disproportionate impact of the "war on drugs," in which two-thirds of all persons in prison for drug offenses are people of color. Furthermore, the number of women in prison, a third of whom are incarcerated for drug offenses, is increasing at nearly double the rate for men. Sadly, many of these women and men leave children behind who would clearly benefit from continued contact with their parents. Almost off of these prisoners leave behind families and loved ones who are eager to speak to them.

Outside contact is essential to most incarcerated individuals – it helps them contact attorneys, maintain ties to loved ones and communities outside the prison or jail, and it

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helps them report abuses. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated and common sense dictates that maintaining a connection with loved ones, friends, and families while incarcerated is a key component in reducing recidivism.

Finally, the NAACP applauds the FCC in addressing an issue which is akin to an additional, wealth stripping penalty on families of incarcerated people, who are themselves disproportionately low-income Americans and people of color. By charging disproportionately high rates to incarcerated people and their families on the outside, companies are targeting a community with predatory fees simply because they can. Not only is this immoral and enraging, it is counterproductive in that it strips money from those who can, for the most part, ill-afford to spend their scarce resources trying to stay in touch with their loved ones and might discourage these often vital links to the outside.

Again, the NAACP strongly supports the efforts by the FCC to clamp down on unnecessarily high, predatory phone rates charged to prisoners and their families, and we would like to thank the Commission for its activities in this area.

Thank you in advance for your attention to the NAACP position. Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office at (202) 463-2940.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Hilary O. Shelton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Hilary O. Shelton
Director, NAACP Washington Bureau &
Senior Vice President for Advocacy and Policy