

JACKIE WALORSKI  
2ND DISTRICT, INDIANA

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON BUDGET  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1402

December 13, 2013

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1252

WCB  
Consumers -  
mate calling  
'ACCEPTED/FILED

MAR 28 2014

Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary

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

Dear Secretary Dortch,

I am contacting you regarding the Federal Communications Commission's final rule setting rates for inmate interstate calling services (Federal Register Document Number 2013-26378).

While it is important that inmate phone calls to family and friends not be prohibitively expensive, I am concerned that capping inmate interstate telephone services at the rates set forth in the rule will be detrimental to our nation's prisons and jails.

Allowing inmates to maintain connections with the outside world through telephone calls can lead to better rehabilitation outcomes. A 2011 report from the Minnesota Department of Corrections found that inmate contact with friends and family can reduce recidivism by 25 percent. Inmates' families, many of which are poor, oftentimes find that accepting phone calls from loved ones in prison can be cost-prohibitive.

However, the high calling costs from many prisons are due in part to the unique security challenges inherent in providing telephone privileges to inmates. Phone companies also offer a percentage of the fees they charge to connect prisoners' calls to prisons and jails. The prisons in turn use those commissions to pay for security, staff salaries and benefits, activities for inmates, educational programs, and general telephone infrastructure. This has been a longstanding practice in most states, and is no cost to the taxpayers.

The FCC order effectively reduces the commissions jails and prisons would receive and does not adequately take into account the unique nature of administering and monitoring inmate calling services in jails and prisons. If commissions to jails and prisons are reduced, which would likely be the case under this rule, jails and prisons will likely be forced to limit availability of not just telephone services, but other services important to inmate security and wellbeing, as well. The rule hits local jails especially hard, since their smaller size and higher turnover rates mean that jails must charge more per minute in order to recover the costs of providing inmate calling services.

On behalf of local law enforcement and all of my constituents, I urge the FCC to reevaluate the order and consider more practical, commonsense regulation of rates that considers the full

impacts rate capping could have on safety and security and the differences between the prisons and county jails in which these services are offered.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jackie Walorski". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Jackie Walorski  
Member of Congress

cc: Julie A. Veach, Chief, Wireline Competition Bureau, Federal Communications Commission