

## Dollars and Sense: The Case for Prison Phone Justice

Written by Natalie Peterson, Dr. Artika Tyner, and Shannon West (Community Justice Project)  
Friday, 08 March 2013 14:14



## PRISON PHONE JUSTICE

**Strong Families, Safe Communities**

**Did you know- A fifteen minute collect phone call received from a loved one who is incarcerated can cost up to \$17?**

**Does the high cost of prison phone calls make it difficult for you to stay in contact with your loved ones who are in prison?**

## LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!

### Take action by:

1.) Calling the Storyline and sharing your experience—  
1-877-410-4863 (press 3)

2.) Submitting comments to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)  
Go to [www.phonejustice.org](http://www.phonejustice.org)  
Click "Take Action"  
Click "Submit a comment"  
Enter the requested information and click "Submit"

3.) Writing a letter to your local newspaper editor

Go to [www.phonejustice.org](http://www.phonejustice.org)

Click "Take Action"

Click "Send a letter to the editor"

Select a newspaper

Submit the draft letter or personalize the letter

**Comments due by Monday  
March 25, 2013!**



Main Street Project

St. Paul Branch NAACP

Community Justice Project



There are over 2.4 million children with a mother or father in jail or prison right now and tragically the high-cost of prison phone calls is cutting them off from contact. For 15,000 children in Minnesota this is a lived reality. Prison phone rates unfairly punish prisoners' families, forcing them to pay up to \$20 for a 15-minute collect phone call to speak with a loved one in prison. Thankfully, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is taking steps that would lower the cost of prison phone calls. The FCC recently initiated a proceeding, to determine if federal regulation is necessary for interstate prison telephone calling systems.

Intervention is needed to regulate the prison phone call industry in order to cap the high cost of prison phone calls and offer an affordable method for families to remain in contact. Phone rates in prison do not reflect the cost of service. To the contrary, telephone companies have put in place commissions and call markups that increase the cost of calls to and from prison by 60 percent, making it clear that the FCC needs to step in and establish a standard rate for these calls. In Minnesota, state prisons receive 49% commissions on phone calls made from prisons which generate about \$1.5 million in revenue each year. In turn, families must bear the burden

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of choosing between accepting a loved one's call from prison and meeting their basic budgetary needs.

The FCC has the authority to regulate these egregious call rates and, in doing so, make our communities safer and more stable places to live. Numerous studies show that prisoners who maintain family connections are much less likely to reoffend, therefore breaking the cycle of recidivism. Our families and communities can't wait any longer. Join the Campaign for Prison Phone Justice in telling the FCC that the time is now to act to end high prison phone rates. Fair rates on phone calls will help to promote strong families and safe communities. Visit [www.phonjustice.org](http://www.phonjustice.org)

to find out how you can take action by supporting prison phone justice reform efforts.