

CRIMINAL CHARGES

Fighting for Your Right to Call Home

Tools for families, prisoners, activists, organizers, and communities to fight the high cost of calls from prison



WORKING NARRATIVES

www.phonejustice.org

Criminal Charges

Fighting for Your Right to Call Home

by the Center for Media Justice

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This publication was created by the Center for Media Justice as part of our technical assistance role with the Media Action Grassroots Network (MAG-Net) and their Prison Phone Justice effort, lead by Working Narratives.

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For more information about the Prison Phone Justice organizing effort, contact info@phonejustice.org.



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Part 1: Introduction

Using This Toolkit: Easy Actions and Deep Work

The Prison Phone Justice Toolkit was created for:

Criminal justice activists and media justice activists, prisoners' family groups, legal advocates, and other organizers working for human rights for incarcerated people, low-income families, and communities of color.

We believe that the fight for affordable phone rates for incarcerated people is an opportunity to build on decades of work by prisoner's families and their allies and win new policy victories at the national and state levels.

For busy organizations, these tools can help you easily and quickly:

- join with state and national efforts to lower prison phone rates
- seek support on this issue from allies and community members
- include prison phone issues in outreach to media and policymakers

For groups who are ready to create media projects or organize local actions, this toolkit provides guides and information that can help you:

- gather stories from people affected by prison phone overcharging
- develop grassroots campaigns targeting state-level change
- host educational events and organize with community members on prison phone issues
- produce community radio, TV, and live programs on the topic

The first sections of the toolkits are divided into general action strategies:

Part Two: Activate Your Allies and Community

Part Three: Gather Stories

Part Four: Advocate to Policymakers

Part Five: Get Press Attention

Facts and statistics mentioned briefly throughout these pages are explained in more detail in the fact sheets, research summaries, and glossary in Part Six.

Part 2: Activate Your Allies and Your Community

Grassroots community groups and their allies have used boycotts and protests, creative media, policymaker pressure, and lawsuits to fight for fair phone rates.

Asking your organization, allies, networks, and community members to support the Prison Phone Justice Campaign can build power for policy change.

The tools in this section can help you:

- produce a presentation or event on prison phone issues to move people to action
- connect with local groups working for prison phone justice
- learn about conditions in your state and develop a local campaign

Quick and easy ways to help lower the cost of prison calls:

- **Go online to PhoneJustice.org** to add your name and organization to the campaign, and to send letters to your governor and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
- **Copy the following pages from this toolkit and hand them out at meetings and other events, or post in community spaces:**
 - Issues overview on page 20
 - Community outreach poster on page 7
 - Media producers and artists flyer on page 14
 - Fact sheet on page 27
- **Spread the word through social media:**
 - Facebook: “Friend” us: www.facebook.com/prisonphonejustice
 - Twitter: Follow the campaign @prisonphonejustice, @thousandkites, @mediaaction, @mediajustice.
 - Use hashtags #phonejustice, #mediajustice.
 - Tumblr: prisonphonejustice.tumblr.com
 - YouTube Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/storyteam>

Tools for a Prison Phone Justice Event

For background information to help you prepare a presentation see Part Six of this toolkit, especially the 2011 Research Summary on page 30.

MULTIMEDIA

The Prison Phone Justice Slideshow is available for download from phonejustice.org/slideshow.

The full 15-25-minute slideshow includes personal audio stories from people struggling with excessive prison phone rates and videos from the victorious NY Campaign for Telephone Justice (internet needed for audio/video clips).

More audio and video stories are online at phonejustice.org/stories.

PRINT MATERIALS

Flyers to handout:

- Campaign overview one-pager on page 20
- The Prison Industrial Complex and the Prison Phone Industry on page 37
- Poster for community outreach on page 7
- Flyer for media producers and artists on page 14
- Fact Sheet on phone issues on page 27
- Invitation to send to current prisoners on page 13

Written FCC petition to mail to the Federal Communications Commission on page 23.

You are welcome to print, copy and share any of the materials in this toolkit as best fits your audience and your event.

FACILITATOR GUIDES

To organize popular education workshops and build a community campaign for prison phone justice, see the tools for “Develop a Local Campaign” on page 6.

To host a performance, film or radio event and generate community dialogue about criminal justice issues, download the Working Narratives Facilitators’ Guide:
www.thousandkites.org/storage/appalshop/documents/thousandkitesfacilitationguide.pdf.

INSTANT ACTIONS FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

At the end of your presentation or event, you can ask people at that to pick up pen, phone or computer to take action at that moment.

- **ONLINE:** anyone with internet access at that moment can go to phonejustice.org, join the campaign and send a letter to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and their state governor.
- **PAPER:** ask everyone to sign your copy of the print petition to the FCC, then mail it to the Prison Phone Justice campaign and we’ll get it to Washington.
- **PHONE:** people with personal experience with prison, jail or detention phone overcharging can record their story on the 24/7 phone line, toll-free: 877-518-0606. We invite them to speak from the heart.
- **MAIL:** people can take a copy the “Invitation to Current Prisoners” flyer to mail to someone they know in prison who might want to share their own story.

Learning about Your State and Connecting with Local Groups

At the national level, the Prison Phone Justice effort is targeting the FCC to lower the price for interstate calls, but the rates for in-state and local calls are regulated at the state level.

Every state situation is different, even though there are similar political challenges and it's often the same companies who are profiteering across different states.

Learn about current conditions in your state (or the state where your loved one is incarcerated)

- State-by-state list of current prison phone rates and companies: www.etccampaign.com/rates.php
- State-by-state chart of policy progress and setbacks: www.etccampaign.com/progress.php
- Map of states accepting kickbacks from prison phone companies: www.phonejustice.org

Information tracked by National CURE's ETC Campaign and Prison Legal News. It is a challenge to keep this data updated for advocates so please alert these groups via their websites if you have new information.

Connect with local groups

In many states, groups of prisoners' families and friends have been working to lower phone rates and can update you on the latest developments and what support they need at this time.

For these mainly volunteer, grassroots efforts, donations of money and time are usually very needed, and publicity and official endorsements from other organizations are helpful as well.

Groups may have an upcoming protest or event to support, research projects or policy/legal analysis that need help, or a campaign you can join.

Below and on the next page are websites and contacts for local groups.

REGIONAL ANCHORS OF THE MEDIA ACTION GRASSROOTS NETWORK

APPALACHIA

Working Narratives
www.phonejustice.org
info@phonejustice.org
(606) 454-8864

ILLINOIS

Community Media Workshop,
www.communitymediaworkshop.org
diana@newstips.org
(312) 369-7722

CALIFORNIA / BAY AREA

Media Alliance
www.media-alliance.org
information@media-alliance.org
(510) 832-9000

Urbana Champaign Independent Media Center
www.ucimc.org
(217) 344-8820
imc@ucimc.org

CALIFORNIA / LOS ANGELES

Instituto de Educacion Popular del Sur de California
www.idepsca.org
pedro@idepsca.org
(818) 447-2798

MINNESOTA

Main Street Project
www.mainstreetproject.org
info@mainstreetproject.org
(612) 879-7578

NEW MEXICO

Media Literacy Project
www.medialiteracyproject.org
info@medialiteracyproject.org
(505) 828-3129

NEW YORK

Peoples Production House
www.peoplesproductionhouse.org,
carlos@peoplesproductionhouse.org
(212) 334-7433

PENNSYLVANIA / PHILADELPHIA

Media Mobilizing Project
www.mediamobilizing.org
twolfson@mediamobilizingproject.org
(215) 990-3702

SOUTHEAST

Highlander Research and Education Center
www.highlandercenter.org
hrec@highlandercenter.org
(865) 933-3443

Art is Change
www.artischange.com
sage@artischange.com

TEXAS

Martinez Street Women's Center
www.mswomenscenter.org
info@mswomenscenter.org
(210)299-2666

Southwest Workers Union
www.swunion.org
laura@swunion.org
(210) 299-2666

More State-Based Groups Leading Prison Phone Campaigns:

- **Illinois:** Campaign for Telephone Justice, www.illinoistelephonejustice.com
- **New York:** FREE! Families Rally for Emancipation and Empowerment, www.freefamilies.us
- **Michigan:** Citizens for Prison Reform, www.micpr.org

National Groups with Local Chapters

- **Prisoner Rights:** CURE, lead by former prisoners and family members and friends of prisoners: www.curenational.org/state-chapters.html
- **Immigration Detention Issues:** www.DetentionWatchNetwork.org
- **Juvenile Justice Issues:** Community Justice Network for Youth: www.cjny.org
- **Civil Liberties:** Contact your state chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (look them up at www.aclu.org/affiliates) or other regional prisoner rights groups. See if they are already working to reduce prison, jail, and/or detention phone rates in the state or know of groups who are.

Develop A Local Campaign

The excessive cost of calls from prison, jail, and detention centers affects everyone who has a friend or family member behind bars and expands the overall social problems caused by mass incarceration—making it an effective issue to help mobilize community organizing for human rights and dismantle the prison-industrial complex.

MAG-Net will be hosting conferences, online workshops (“webinars”), and telephone strategy sessions to support groups doing state-level prison justice campaigns.

To help you get started or build your campaign:

- **Contact the Prison Phone Justice organizing effort to learn about upcoming events for organizers and other resources: info@phonejustice.org**
- **Learn about conditions in your state and connect with local groups on page 5.**
- **Organize a series of planning workshops:**
 - Start with the materials listed on page 3. (“Tools for a prison phone justice event”).
 - If your group includes people with personal experience with prison phones, see the section “Gather Stories” on page 8.
 - Use popular education tools as a group to map what you know about the current power-holders on the issue and how to inspire them to support reform.
 - Identify your research questions and strategies (what you need to know and how you will find out).
 - Develop a campaign strategy that fits the capacity of your group.

RESOURCES

Strategic campaign development webinar:

A 40-minute online audio recording with slides and worksheets that teaches how to develop your own strategic campaign. Created by the Center for Media Justice and featuring Alicia Garza of POWER in San Francisco. Watch online: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahEKqKj7IPU&feature=youtu.be>

Popular education and planning tools:

Worksheets and group activity guides are available at phonejustice.org/toolkit/pop-ed

NY Campaign for Telephone Justice mini-documentary:

A nine-minute video showcasing the tactics used to win lower phone rates in New York. Watch online: ccrjustice.org/telephonejustice

For youth justice, access the “Upset the Set Up” system accountability toolkit:

The Community Justice Network for Youth “outlines the steps of successful community-based strategies used to reform the practices and policies of juvenile jurisdictions.” For info and to order contact Malachi: mgarza@burnsinstitute.org or (415)321-4100 x110.

PRISON PHONES RATES

Community ties are broken. Prisoners and their families are silenced.
The outrageous overcharges can be stopped!

Join the fight for communication rights.

- Families pay excessive rates to speak with a loved one in prison.
- Prison phone prices are set by corporate greed and government kickback schemes.
- Phone profiteering abuse is widespread in jails, juvenile facilities, and immigration detention centers.
- Low-income families and communities of color are hit hardest by this exploitation.

Have prison phone costs impacted your family?
Call toll-free, 24/7, and record your story today.
877-518-0606

Activists have been fighting back and
WINNING LOWER RATES

With the Prison Phone Justice Organizing Effort You Can:
Share your story or stories from your community
Contact officials to give feedback on rates or service
Win policy change by joining with national coalitions

WWW.PHONEJUSTICE.ORG



From the Prison Phone Justice Toolkit. Please copy, post, and hand out in your community.

Part 3: Gather Stories

Real stories can move people and influence policy change. The PPJ organizing effort brings together personal stories to build support for prison phone justice.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- **Share your personal story.** Have prison phone costs affected you or your family? Speak from the heart.
 - Phone: Call this toll-free, 24/7 phone line to record your story: 877-518-0606
 - Online: upload audio, video or text: www.phonejustice.org/submit
- **Post a flyer in your community asking for stories.** See poster on page 7..
- **Record interviews with people who have personal experiences with overpriced prison, jail, or detention phone service.**
 - Basic guide for recording interviews on pages 9 and 10.
 - Upload your media: www.phonejustice.org/submit
- **Gather a group together to share stories.** Refer to “Hosting A Listening Circle” on pages 11 and 12.
- **Invite currently incarcerated people to write letters or make artwork about prison phones and connecting with family.** Mail the invite found on page 13.
- **Partner with a local community radio producer or access TV host to produce a program about prisoners’ communication rights.** See these tools on page 14.
- **Visit the online story bank of the Prison Phone Justice effort:** phonejustice.org/stories.

Guide for Recording Interviews

VIDEO INTERVIEW TIPS

Recording good video

- Try to get as close to the person or subject who you want to record. Avoid using the zoom to get closer unless you need to. It's better to physically get as close as possible. Try to record people from the front so that you can see both of their eyes
- The mic records at the best quality when someone is speaking in the direction of the camera, so try to get people to speak in front of you, instead of from the side.
- While recording, hold the camera steady using both hands and avoid zooming.

Being an effective interviewee

- When recording an interview, keep your focus on the person you're speaking to by looking in their eyes. Avoid looking at the camera too much.
- If possible, move to a location that is quiet and free from background noise.

Editing an effective video

- Each clip should be on screen long enough to tell what's going on, but not too long. In general, about 5 seconds for each clip is about right to start with.
- Avoid using many transition effects, such as dissolves and wipes. Try to just use a simple cut whenever possible.

Sharing the video online

- Post the video on YouTube:
 - Upload a high-quality video, but make sure the file is not too big (generally under 200 MB).
 - Provide a short description and if possible a link to a relevant website in the description box.
 - Add tags to help people find the video.
 - You can specify where the video was recorded on a map within YouTube.
- Upload your video to the story bank: phonejustice.org/submit





ONLINE TOOLS FOR RECORDING INTERVIEWS

Personal permission release form for Working Narratives to use video: Download and print this form for your interviewee to sign, giving us permission to use the recording in our campaign: www.phonejustice.org/images/uploads/release%20form.doc

Tips for shooting video with a low-cost Flip Cam: A simple guide you can download from Working Narratives. www.phonejustice.org/images/uploads/how%20to%20shoot%20video%20with%20a%20flip%20cam.doc

Guide to creating video on a mobile phone: Extensive tips and details on using your mobile phone to capture and share video are in this online resource from the Mobile Media Toolkit: www.mobilemediatoolkit.org/create-video-on-phone-en#&panel1-3

Guide to making a human rights film: Library of online video and written guides for each step of making an advocacy video, including planning, technical aspects of filming, and safety issues for reporter and subject, from Witness: witness.org/training

Audio recording checklist: Tips on how to get a good-sounding recording, taking effective interview steps, and managing background sound are covered in this guide from EmpowerDC's Grassroots Media Project: www.grassrootsmediaproject.org/classes-workshops-2/radio-production-training/audio-recording-check-list

Guide for Hosting a Listening Circle

Introduction

Roadside Theater's listening circles provide another way for communities to generate a meaningful community dialogue about criminal justice issues. Listening circles can be used after a documentary film screening, a spoken-word performance, or on their own. If you record your circle, please share some of your stories with Working Narratives by calling the StoryLine anytime at 877-518-0606. Or call in to share your reflections on the listening circle.

Listening Circle Description

A listening circle is a small group of people sitting in a circle, telling and listening to stories or remembrances, led by a listening circle facilitator. Each listening circle is different according to its purpose.



What is a Story?

A story is a personal memory about something that happened to you or someone you know, or a memory about something you or someone you know did. Humans are the storytelling animals. We tell each other stories every day that have characters, action, plot, and narrative, but we usually just don't think of what we share with others as having those components.

What is Not a Story?

A story is not a lecture, debate, project description, or mission statement, nor an intellectualization or argument.

Listening Circles Do:

Consist of from five to 20 people sitting on individual chairs in a circle (without holding onto notepads, pocketbooks, etc.) in such a manner that each participant has a good view of every other participant

- Have a facilitator who begins, facilitates, and ends the circle
- Have a stated time period in which the listening circle will take place
- Have a purpose articulated by the facilitator and agreed to by the participants
- Allow for silences, which can be an important way to honor a story
- Emphasize as much listening as telling

Listening Circles Don't:

- Give importance to one story over another, one type of story over another, or one person in the group over another
- Get recorded or videotaped without the participants' permission
- Get used for any type of therapy

Listening Circle Rules:

There is only one listening circle facilitator.

- There are no observers—only participants. (The listening circle facilitator is also a participant, and must tell his or her story as well.)
- Participants speak only when it is their turn.
- When it is his or her turn, the participant may decide to pass.
- Participants and the facilitator never argue with nor debate another participant's story.
- Participants and the facilitator never comment on another participant's story other than to say something like, "That story reminds me of . . ."
- There is no crosstalk (talking out-of-turn) in a listening circle.

The Listening Circle Facilitator:

- Introduces herself or himself, describes the circle's purpose and theme, tells when the circle will end, and asks each member to pace the length of their stories to the time available for each individual.
- Describes the rules of the listening circle and answers participants' questions about the rules.
- Emphasizes the idea that listening to the stories of others is as important as telling your own.
- Discourages participants from thinking too much about what they will say when it is their turn, assuring them they can pass if they have nothing to say.
- Begins the circle with a story that sets the proper tone for the purpose and theme of the circle, or states the theme and asks who in the circle would like to tell the first story.
- Goes around the circle clockwise or counterclockwise, with each person telling or passing when it is their turn.
- Before ending the listening circle, asks if people who have passed would now like to speak.
- Ends on time.
- Leaves time for participants to talk informally to each other when the listening circle is over.

Invitation for Current Prisoners to Write Letters

Personal letters and artwork from incarcerated people are a powerful part of our campaign to lower the unfair cost of phone calls from jail, detention, and prison.

Do you know someone in prison who would like to contribute? We hope you will clip and mail them the section below to pass along the invitation.

JOIN THE PRISON PHONE JUSTICE CAMPAIGN!

We are asking people inside jails, prisons, and detention centers to write about the cost of phone calls for you and your family.

Your letters, poems, personal essays, and artwork will help us build public support as we push national and local policymakers to lower the cost of prison phone calls.

WE INVITE YOU TO:

- **Write a public letter (one page, one side) about expensive prison phone calls.**
Letters will be sent to the federal agency in charge of phone rates.
Begin the letter "Dear Chairman Genachowski."
Describe how the high cost has affected your communication with family and friends.
Explain how phone bills and calling restrictions affect your family finances.
Speak from your own experience.
Please sign your letter with the understanding that it will be public.
- **Send artwork/poetry about the importance of your connections to family and community.**

Letters, stories, and art will be sent to the Federal Communications Commission, shared online, and presented in public venues. (We cannot return artwork).

MAIL LETTERS AND ARTWORK TO:

**Prison Phone Justice Campaign
P.O. Box 2420, West Brattleboro, VT 05303**

The prison facility that helps register the most letters for the campaign will be thanked on the website and credited as a co-producer on our national radio program.

Encourage your family members and friends to sign up at www.PhoneJustice.org to share their own stories and access tools and information about stopping prison phone overcharging.



COMMUNITY ARTISTS, PRODUCERS, AND JOURNALISTS: YOU CAN HELP LOWER THE COST OF PHONE CALLS FROM PRISON!

The Prison Phone Justice Campaign is an alliance of media, arts, and social justice groups working to stop the widespread abuse of prison phone overcharging. Join us.

GATHER AND SHARE STORIES:

- **Produce interviews** with people who have been affected by the excessive price of phone calls from prison, jail, or detention. Share the stories online.
- **Create posters or public art** about the prison phone problem and invite people to call our hotline with their personal story.
- **Invite current prisoners to write letters** describing the challenges they face from overpriced phone service. We will send the letters to policymakers.

Get the Prison Phone Justice Toolkit
at www.phonejustice.org

- Online story bank and upload form
- Basic A/V guide and release form
- Slideshow presentation
- Community outreach flyer
- Radio/TV show prep sheet
- How to host a listening session
- Invitation for prisoner art and letters

PRODUCE A RADIO OR TV SHOW:

- **Work with a community radio station or community TV channel** to facilitate a discussion on “Connecting Families: Prisoner Communication Rights,” inviting former prisoners, family members, and advocates to discuss communication as a human right. The PPJ Campaign can connect you with national experts to interview on your show.
- **Host a public event** on this topic in collaboration with community-based prison reform or social justice organizers. Share the event audio or video recording online.

PARTNER WITH GROUPS IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

- **Connect with local prisoner family groups** and other prisoners’ advocates with campaigns that can use the support of local artists and media. Find groups via www.phonejustice.org.
- **Invite a group together to listen to stories** recorded at PhoneJustice.org, show our slideshow, and use these resources to spark local actions and projects.

SPREAD THE WORD THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA:

- **Facebook:** “Friend” us: www.facebook.com/prisonphonejustice
- **Twitter:** Follow the campaign @prisonphonejustice, @thousandkites, @mediaaction, @mediajustice. Use #phonejustice, #mediajustice.
- **Tumblr:** prisonphonejustice.tumblr.com
- **YouTube Channel:** <http://www.youtube.com/user/storyteam>

Please post this flyer at your local community media or arts center

Community Radio and Access TV Host Topic Guide

Prep sheet for a discussion show on prison communication rights

TOPIC: Connecting Families: Prisoner Communication Rights

CONTACT: _____

(Name and contact information for the community group proposing this radio or TV show)

The Prison Phone Justice Campaign invites you to partner with us by facilitating a discussion on “Connecting Families: Prisoner Communication Rights.” The national PPJ Campaign can promote your show on this topic and link to it through websites and social media.

GUEST SPEAKERS AVAILABLE

Invite former prisoners, prisoner family members, and advocates to discuss communication as a human right. In addition to local guests, national prison rights expert Paul Wright, of Prison Legal News, is available to join your program and discuss this issue and what can be done.

AUDIO CLIPS AVAILABLE—REAL PEOPLE, REAL STORIES

Online: <http://www.phonejustice.org/stories>

CORE QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What are the communication challenges facing incarcerated people and their families?
- How are these challenges being addressed?
- What is the broader impact of the current communications system?
- Why should we be concerned about prisoner communication rights? What is at stake?

TOPIC BACKGROUND: Communication as a Human Right

We hold communication as a human right, yet millions of people languish in our nation’s prisons, cut off from their families and communities due to restrictive policies and exorbitant telephone fees that make communication for many of our most vulnerable communities impossible.

In this era of unprecedented technological access, phones are a vital part of our communication system and something many of us take for granted. Yet for prisoners, phone calls and the connection they provide are treated as an expensive privilege rather than a basic right. As prisoners are increasingly incarcerated far from home, phones are becoming the only way for some families and friends to stay in touch. Families can be forced to spend hundreds of dollars per month for a weekly phone call, due to exorbitant rates set by the phone companies chosen to serve prisons and often the kickbacks they give states to win the contract.

Thanks to more than 20 years of activism by families of prisoners, several states have finally ended kickbacks and lowered the rates, and a win at the federal level looks within reach. But more action is urgently needed to make this happen. Policymakers need to hear from the public.

FACT SHEETS, RESEARCH, TESTIMONIALS, AND MORE: PhoneJustice.org/TOOLKIT

Please contact the Prison Phone Justice Campaign for additional information and to let us know your broadcast date and how to feature your program on our website.

Part 4: Advocate to Policymakers

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in Washington, D.C., is the agency responsible for regulating telephone rates between states. These long-distance “interstate” calls are some of the most expensive for incarcerated people and their families.

Although the FCC has received policy recommendations from groups of prisoner family members, legal advocates, and hundreds of supporters via the Wright Petition, they have not acted on this issue. **We make it easy for you to add your voice to ask the FCC to do the right thing and accept the recommendations to lower the rates.**

- Use the form at prisonphonejustice.org to send a letter to the FCC.
- Print the petition on page 23 and gather signatures, then mail us the page to the address listed at the bottom of petition.

Congress oversees the FCC and we can also ask our Senators and House members to urge the agency to take action and fix this unfair and widespread problem.

- See if your state has a representative on the Senate Committee on Science, Commerce, and Transportation: commerce.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?p=CommitteeMembers, or on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce: energycommerce.house.gov/about/members.shtml
- To contact your representative about this issue by phone, email, letter, or office visit, you can use the following points and the policy brief on page 20. If you have personal experience with the excessive rates, please mention those in your letter. And consider using these additional phrases/tips:
 - I am asking for your help in getting the FCC to act on a telephone rate problem that affects millions of people around the country.
 - Families with loved ones in jail, prison, or detention must pay excessive rates for phone calls, weakening the family ties that are essential for helping incarcerated people find homes, jobs, and crime-free lives after release.
 - We need the FCC to end kickbacks and profiteering by the prison telephone industry. Phone systems should allow debit calling, more affordable options, and the lowest possible rate for consumers.
 - Please urge the FCC to approve the Wright Petition, CC Docket No. 96-128, which has been pending before the FCC for eight years.

AT THE STATE LEVEL

Rates for in-state and local calls are regulated at the state level. Officials need to hear from families who are hurt by excessive prison phone rates, and from the nonprofit groups who support them.

State governors, legislators, utility regulators, and corrections officials can set policies and contracts that enable the vital communication between prisoners and loved ones. They can stop this decades-long financial exploitation of poor families and communities of color by companies getting rich in the prison phone business.

In several states, activists won lower phone rates through grassroots campaigns and advocacy projects that convinced one or two policymakers to take action to fix this injustice.

Send letters and phone calls to your state officials, and ask for a meeting at the policymaker's office or testify at a public hearing on telecom issues. For an online form and sample letter to use when contacting your governor, go to: PhoneJustice.org

*** PLEASE SEND A COPY OF YOUR LETTER TO LOCAL MEDIA AND TO OUR CAMPAIGN ***

POLICY DEMANDS AND MESSAGING

- Learn about conditions in your state on page 18.
- If your state accepts prison-phone commissions, ask lawmakers to ban kickbacks. If your state doesn't allow more affordable debit calling, request they change that policy.
- Ask states that are collect-call only to allow the more affordable option of debit calling for prisoners. There is no technical reason to block the technologies that make phone calling more affordable for the general public.
- Stories have power. Officials need to hear about excessive bills, unexplained fees, and quality and service problems with prison phone calls. Bring actual copies of bills to visits with policymakers. Reach out to local journalists with local stories.
- Research on the problems of the prison telephone system for families, communities, human rights, and public policy are highlighted in this toolkit. Our fact sheet, policy brief, and other materials can provide background for your advocacy.

**Stories have power.
Officials to hear
about excessive
bills, unexplained
fees, and quality and
service problems with
prison phone calls”**



Contacting State Officials

STATE LAWMAKERS

Governors and state legislators in some states have already begun helping by banning kickbacks for prison phone contracts.

Governor contact info: <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Governors.shtml>

Advocacy efforts can focus on the legislator for your county, the members of the state legislative committee overseeing corrections, or others lawmakers who might be sympathetic.

State legislator contact info: <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/state-legislatures.html>

STATE UTILITY REGULATORS

Your state Public Utility Commission or Public Service Commission is supposed to regulate phone services for the people of the state. Past efforts with state PUCs have often found they side with the phone industry over the public, but they are in a position to help stop this consumer abuse.

State utility regulators have public meetings listed on their websites.

Attend and voice your concerns with prison phone rates. Bring stories, copies of actual bills.

Find your state utility regulators: <http://www.naruc.org/commissions.cfm>

To file a consumer complaint: Report cases of excessive charges, bad service.

Consumer office of the State Attorney General: <http://www.etccampaign.com/policymakers.php>

State Departments of Corrections: <http://www.etccampaign.com/policymakers.php>
In some states there is a Corrections Ombudsman to contact about issues for inmates.

Prison phone companies and the Better Business Bureau for their region:
<http://www.etccampaign.com/phoneaddress.php>

For complaints on rates and service for out-of-state prison calls, contact the FCC:
www.fcc.gov/guides/inmate-telephone-service

Talking Points and Letter Tips for State Officials

The following points can be used for letters or in direct testimony when meeting officials.

General points for letters:

- I am writing to ask for your leadership in lowering the rates for phone calls from state prisons and jails. I believe that families and communities should come before profit.
- Contracts for prison phone service should be bid on the basis of who can provide the lowest price to the consumer, and should not be a financial hardship on the families and friends who are trying to support and help their loved ones who are incarcerated.
- Our communities are disadvantaged when prisoners are unable to maintain family ties that will help them succeed post-release, and I ask you to act now.

Depending on the specific conditions in your state, your letter could also include:

- Inmate phone systems should allow debit calling and more affordable options for customers.
- Contracts for prison phone service should be awarded based on who can provide lowest price to the consumer, not which company provides the highest commission to our state government.
- Phone customers should not be forced to pay surcharges to cover budget expenses for the prison system. Surcharges and kickbacks are unfair tax on families who can least afford it.

If you have personal experience, name your complaints.

Some of the issues that have been common for people receiving calls from people in prison:

- I was charged for calls I was not home to receive.
- I had calls dropped or cut off too quickly.
- I had my phone number blocked over billing arrangements so I cannot receive calls.
- I am charged extremely high rates.
- I am not allowed less expensive calling options. There is no technical reason why I should not be able to receive more affordable prepaid and/or debit calls.
- I am forced to pay in advance for collect phone calls, and never receive an accounting of dates, times, and length of calls charged against that prepayment.
- The phone company charges me to process my payment.

Additional personal letter tips: <http://www.etccampaign.com/advocates.php>

Policy Brief: Prison Phone Rates and Regulation

A social justice issue and human rights crisis.

The excessive rates and fees set by prison and jail phone systems cause widespread financial hardship for low-income families and communities of color.

- To receive an interstate call from a person in prison can cost more than \$17 for a 15 minute call plus fees of \$3–7 or more to add money to accounts, close accounts, or receive a bill, or for other “administrative transactions.” This adds hundreds of dollars per month to family phone bills. (Prison Legal News, 2011)
- Family members of prisoners are the primary customers paying extortionate high prices to prison telephone corporations with monopoly contracts. (PLN, 2011; Urban Institute, 2005)
- Rates of imprisonment are disproportionately higher for low-income communities and people of color. (Justice Policy Institute, 2010)
- The majority of prisons built in the past 30 years are in rural areas, requiring long-distance calls to maintain family and community ties. (Working Narratives, 2011)
- More than 2.7 million children now have a parent behind bars—1 in 28 Latino children, 1 in 9 black children. (Pew Charitable Trusts, 2010)

High prison phone costs reduce access to counsel and weaken the family and community ties that are essential for positive results post-release.

Organizations from a wide range of criminal justice, legal advocacy, economic development, and consumer rights perspectives have been urging prison phone reform. Family support groups across the country have been seeking court relief on this issue for more than 20 years. (National CURE, American Bar Association, Commission on Safety and Abuse in America’s Prisons)

Rates for calls from prisons, jails, and detention centers vary widely across states, driven by monopoly contracts and:

- High commission “kickbacks” to official contracting agencies to win contracts.
- Restrictions against more affordable technologies such as debit calling and VOIP.
- Lack of regulation mandating affordable service and lowest-rate-possible contracts.
- Frequent overcharging, overbilling, and added fees. (Prison Legal News, 2011)

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The FCC can address this nationwide problem by passing the Wright Petition (CC Docket No. 96-128) and setting standards to ensure consumers who must use prison phone services have options for communications affordability and access. State lawmakers and utility commissions can also set policies for affordable in-state calls.

PRISON PHONE POLICY BRIEF CITATIONS

American Bar Association, Policy position and report, ABA Criminal Justice Section, 2005. www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publishing/criminal_justice_section_newsletter/crimjust_policy_am05115b.authcheckdam.pdf

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Family ties are broken. Prisoners are silenced. Communities are exploited by corporate greed.

Prison Phone Justice

A national campaign challenging prison phone kickbacks and the U.S. prison telephone industry

The current prison telephone system is part of the mass incarceration economy that targets and traps poor families and communities of color.

It can cost more than \$18 for a 15-minute call with a loved one in prison. Families must pay the excessive rates and fees or give up communication.

THERE IS A POLICY OPPORTUNITY

Putting a stop to kickback schemes and profiteering by prison phone corporations will help millions of people.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) can act now to lower the price of interstate calls and set reasonable standards for all prison, jail, and detention phone systems.

More than 20 years of grassroots activism by prisoners' families and their allies has finally led to lower rates and the end of prison phone kickbacks in several states. Broad-based state-level campaigns can demand legislative action.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

The Prison Phone Justice (PPJ) Campaign is urging the FCC to pass the Wright Petition—a set of policy recommendations from prisoner family groups that's endorsed by social service agencies, faith counselors, education mentors, the American Bar Association, and state consumer advocates.

We are gathering personal stories from people affected by prison phone overcharging, and mobilizing public support for policies to reduce the rates.

We are building on years of work by National CURE's ETC (Equitable Telephone Charges) Campaign and the efforts of many grassroots activists. Our tools can strengthen state-level campaigns and bring new allies to fight for communication rights.

The PPJ Campaign is led by Working Narratives with partnership from Center for Media Justice, Prison Legal News, and the 100+ member Media Action Grassroots Network.

While this campaign is currently focused on state prisons, phone pricing abuse is also widespread in jails, immigration detention, and juvenile facilities, where sustained organizing presents additional challenges. Groups are welcome to adapt our materials for that work.



What You Can Do

1. Join the campaign online and ask the FCC to pass the Wright Petition.
2. Use the PPJ Toolkit to:
 - spread the word
 - gather community stories
 - advocate to policymakers
 - organize locally or connect with your local MAG-Net chapter

Petition to the FCC

Dear FCC Chairman Genachoswki:

Our communities need federal oversight of interstate prison phone services with rate caps and rules to ensure fair rates and options for consumers. We are writing to ask you to end kickbacks and price gouging by the prison telephone industry. We believe that families and communities should come before profiteering.

Our communities are harmed when prisoners are unable to maintain family ties that will help them succeed post-release, and we ask you to act now on this important issue. There are over 2.3 million people incarcerated in the United States, and they all have families. Existing prison phone contracts result in exorbitant phone rates and extortionate price gouging of those families. Phone systems should allow debit calling, more affordable options and the lowest possible rate for consumers.

We request that the FCC move to approve the Wright Petition, CC Docket No. 96-128, which has been pending before the FCC for eight years. How much longer must prisoners' families continue to wait, and continue to be exploited by greedy phone companies and the state agencies they contract with, before the FCC takes decisive action?

Thank you for addressing this widespread problem,
The Undersigned

First Name	Last Name	Email		Organization
Mailing Address		City	State	Zip
Comments?				
First Name	Last Name	Email		Organization
Mailing Address		City	State	Zip
Comments?				
First Name	Last Name	Email		Organization
Mailing Address		City	State	Zip
Comments?				
First Name	Last Name	Email		Organization
Mailing Address		City	State	Zip
Comments?				

Please mail to: Prison Phone Justice, c/o Center for Media Justice, 436 14th Street, 5th Floor, Oakland, CA 94612. This letter will be sent on your behalf to FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski; signers will be added to our campaign list.

Get Press Attention

A key part of your grassroots campaign or policy advocacy can be getting media coverage for the issue in a way that builds public support and challenges stereotypes and opposition.

The following pages include a sample letter to the editor and a sample op-ed on the issue of prison phone rates. You are welcome to adapt and use these templates to write to your local newspaper.

Other Resources to Help Planning and Doing Presswork:

- Media how-to's from Center for Media Justice: centerformediajustice.org/toolbox/media-how-tos
- Media planning and presswork tools from Center for Media Justice: centerformediajustice.org/toolbox/presswork-tools
- Communications strategy from the Praxis Project, "Fair Game: A Strategy Guide for Racial Justice Communications in the Obama Era": <http://centerformediajustice.org/2010/12/20/fair-game-blog>
- Immigration detention issues from Detention Watch Network (communications toolkit): www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/sites/detentionwatchnetwork.org/files/Communications%20Toolkit%20DWN%202011-FINAL_.pdf

WRITING AN OP-ED FOR PRISON PHONE JUSTICE

Tips On Writing Op-Eds

- Op-Eds should generally be under 750 words, but check word limits with your local paper.
- Aim to place the op-ed as close as possible to your news event or some notable date, (e.g., holiday that symbolizes your issue, anniversary of an important date, etc.).
- Submit your op-ed at least seven days prior to when you want it published to allow time for the editors to consider it.
- Send the op-ed to only one news outlet at a time. Many news outlets want exclusivity. If they turn you down, you can send it to the next news outlet on your list. This is another reason why it is important to allow enough time to get the op-ed considered by a few outlets.

A Sample Op-Ed: The Hook – The Problem – The Facts – The Solution – What's at Stake

Below is a sample op-ed:

For the over 2.7 million kids facing the uncertainty and alienation that comes with having one or both parents in prison, a phone call with that parent can provide stability, comfort, and a sense of normalcy. For the parent on the other end of the line, that same phone call can offer accountability, and strong motivation to work toward improving the lives of themselves and their family upon release from prison. Research shows that one of the biggest predictors of a person's success post-incarceration is strong and healthy family ties. If we have more people successfully reintegrating back into society, we have lower incarceration costs, more tax-paying citizens, stronger communities, and improved public safety.

It makes sense that the government should want to promote and encourage those phone calls that could mean so much to families with someone incarcerated. Given that the average incarcerated person is housed 100 or more miles from their loved ones, those calls can often be the only way to connect families and maintain the bonds that are so integral to post-incarceration success.

So why is it that a phone call from prison to home costs families 24 times more than a normal call—upwards of \$18 for a short 15 minute conversation? Why is it that up to 60 percent of the costs of a call an inmate makes to their loved one (or \$152 million per year) goes not to the cost of services, but instead toward “commissions,” (that is, padding the pockets of corporations and prison agencies)?

Why is it that instead of promoting healthy families, working toward curbing recidivism, and cutting short- and long-term state and federal costs, the government is working with corporations to put profits before people?

We have to do better. We can do better.

National and state campaigns are underway by CURE, Working Narratives, Human Rights Defense Center, and the more than 100 members of the Media Action Grassroots Network. The Prison Phone Justice Campaign is committed to helping families fight back against the exclusive, expensive contracts that levy unfair and illegal costs on the families that receive calls from those in prison. We’re working to make sure that the men, women, and teens housed in prisons, jails, and juvenile and immigration detention centers are able to connect to the outside world. We care about their connections with their children, spouses, parents, and other loved ones.

Instead of exploiting vulnerable families who are often struggling to make ends meet, we need to work toward building a better future for our children and for those seeking a second chance once they’re released from prison.



Sample Op-Ed and Letter to the Editor

HELPFUL HINTS

- Try to relate your letter to recent publications from the newspaper you are targeting. If they ran a story on incarceration, families of those incarcerated, those recently released, families in low-income communities, etc., you can piggyback off of a dialogue that has already been opened up by the editors/columnists.
- Make your key points immediately, if your letter is too long the editor will either cut the letter (possibly losing key points you wanted to raise) or will look at the length and avoid reading it altogether.
- Make sure you check the editorial submission requirements as you're putting together your letter—usually this will be on the front editorial page or the letters to the editor page of the paper.

SAMPLE LETTER

Dear [Fill in reporter name],

I saw the article you ran on [date] on state concerns about the high reincarceration rate in California (which now hovers at 67%). Thank you for your commitment to issues important to your readers. Often when we talk about prisoner reentry and recidivism, the conversation is framed around the immediate or short-term process of return. The reality is that recidivism rates are significantly impacted by post-prison readjustment, which in turn depends a great deal on the personal relationships and ties that an individual has with the outside world while serving their sentence.

It's crucial that people are able to connect with their family and loved ones to maintain or rebuild the positive support systems that will help them successfully reintegrate into the community and lead law-abiding lives. Sadly, the ability to phone home is often seriously hindered by the outrageous rates and fees that telecom companies charge for calls from prisons, jails, and detention centers.

It can cost more than \$18 for a 15 minute call to talk with a person in prison. The rates are often inflated to cover the "commissions" that telecom corporations pay to prison agencies for exclusive contracts to provide service. This adds up to \$152 million per year in phone-contract commissions to state prisons, paid by families nationwide who want to speak with loved ones.

Are we as a society willing to allow corporations to make excessive profit off vulnerable families, just to make sure that CEOs get their million-dollar bonuses? For families living off a limited income, the cost to make a phone call can be too much and family ties are sacrificed to put food on the table. Ultimately, looking at the state reincarceration rate, it's clear that we all bear the burden of what happens once those ties are fractured.

I'm with [Fill in organization] and we have been working on the Prison Phone Justice Campaign, which is a national grassroots project committed to fighting against the exclusive expensive contracts that levy unfair and illegal costs on the families who receive calls from incarcerated people. Please feel free to email or call me at [FILL IN your direct phone number and email]. We're happy to be one of your community sources in supporting this issue.

Respectfully Yours,

[Fill in your name and organization]

Part 6: Facts, Research, and Background Information

Prison Phone Fact Sheet

**Corporate and government profiteering hurts families and communities.
The U.S. Prison Phone Industry violates communication rights.**

To speak with a loved one in prison costs up to 24x more than a normal call.

- Rates vary widely nationwide, up to more than \$18 for a 15-minute long-distance call.
- Prison call rates have risen as phone costs for the general public have dropped.
- The price-gouging hits families; 2.7 million children have an incarcerated parent: one out of every 28 Latino children in the U.S., and one out of nine black children.
- Overpriced calls affect prisons, jails, and juvenile and immigration detention facilities.

Human rights and community stability require affordable prison phones.

- Mass incarceration and the prison phone industry silence, isolate, and impoverish low income families and communities of color.
- Strong family ties are key factors in successful parole and return to the community, reducing homelessness, unemployment, crime, and drug abuse after release.
- Corrections officials cite phone access as essential for boosting morale and positive motivation among prisoners, especially those incarcerated out of state, far from family.
- The growing security problem of illegal cell phones in prisons is made worse by excessive rates for prison calls. Prisoners need access to loved ones and legal aid.

Phone rates are inflated for corporate profits and government kickbacks.

- Up to 60% of the price of a prisoner's phone call is not for the cost of the service but goes directly to "commissions" for prison agencies. For state prisons alone, these kickbacks add up to an annual \$152 million taken from mostly low-income families.
- 85% of state prison systems receive kickback payments from telephone service providers. Where kickbacks have been banned, prices dropped by 30–80%.
- Many systems require collect calls to a landline, unnecessarily excluding more affordable technologies such as debit cards, calls to cells, and internet phones.

Advocates and policymakers have reduced some rates, more is needed.

- After decades of grassroots campaigns from families of people in prison, eight states have reduced the cost of state prison calls by banning kickbacks.
- The Federal Communications Commission is years overdue to act on the Wright Petition, which would lower rates nationwide and help repair the lack of regulation.
- National and state campaigns are underway by CURE, Working Narratives, Human Rights Defense Center, and the 100+ member Media Action Grassroots Network.

Sources: Prison Legal News (prisonphonejustice.org), 2011; Media Justice Fund research (Dharma Dailey, 2009); "Families Left Behind," Urban Institute study, 2005.

Stories From People Paying the Price

Have prison phone costs affected your family?

Call toll-free, 24/7, and record your story today. Speak from the heart: **877-518-0606**.

STORIES FROM THE WORKING NARRATIVES HOTLINE

Share your story or listen to stories online: PhoneJustice.org/Stories

“Hello, my son is in prison, he has five phone numbers that he can call, those are the only family members who have maintained their jobs through the financial crisis and can accept his calls without worrying about the costs of those each month. He’s lost contact with all the rest of his friends and family members. Now that it’s time to do a support package to ask for him to be paroled, we only have those five family members to ask for support from. The cost of the phone calls has severely limited his chances of gaining parole and using the contacts that he could have had to gain employment when he is released.”

**“My son is in prison...
The cost of the phone
calls has severely
limited his chances of
gaining parole.”**

“Prison phone calls, yes they are very expensive.... I understand it’s a business but major phone companies have lowered their prices to have unlimited long distance calls for a nominal monthly fee compared to years ago....I am sure the FCC can make charges in regard to this. Lowering the prices of prison calls will also make for better inmates....Speaking with families friends and loved ones on a regular basis will give them the support that they need. Speaking with their children often [will] establish better relationships. When they have that communication outside with people who let them know they are loved and someone cares about them, it shows in their actions.”

**“When they have
that communication
outside with people
who let them know
they are loved and
someone cares
about them, it shows
in their actions.”**

“Families today cannot afford to pay the bills. So they cannot communicate with the prisoner. What can we do to help reduce this bill? I feel like this is not a proper way for the family to have to pay for charges that is not necessary when you already have a line at home....Why can we not call our prisoners?”

“Prison phone calls are very very expensive. I have a friend...for him to call my home I have to prepay, and even at one call a week...that costs me \$40–50 a month in addition to my other phone bill. I understand that it can’t be free....If we are punishing the inmate by these phone calls being so expensive, then we are really not punishing the inmate, we are punishing the families.... He only makes 27 cents an hour, that’s crazy, **he’d have to work for a week to be able to pay for one phone call**, even if he could pay for the phone call.”

“My objection with GlobalTelLink, the service that I’ve been using in Massachusetts...we pay \$25 and \$4 of that goes to a fee and that’s 16%, which is rather high percentage all told. That’s my complaint and I hope to voice it along with the thousands of others.”

"I have a complaint about the phone bills from the prisoners to the parents and to the wives and loved ones. I have a son [in one prison] and a grandson [in another]. I have calls from them and the same [local] number shows up on my ID....I pay [almost \$7] for the call from my son...and \$1 for the calls from my grandson, although the numbers are the same....So I do complain. The phone bills are way too high and I think something needs to be done about them. Because a lot of people cannot afford..It's so sad that our loved ones are not allowed to call home."

"I have a friend in Montana that I talk to and Securus is charging us \$30 a call for 20 minutes....I think it's the highest anywhere. It's way above what it would cost for me to call China. And it really upsets me that if we talk how we would like to talk, it would cost us over \$3000 a year. It's ridiculous and it should be stopped, it's just greed, outright greed....I have called and tried to complain and gotten nowhere, they claim that they can't break their contract but that's not true according to Securus. They are not paying anywhere near what we're paying. It's really not fair, it's taking advantage of poor people....They are just hurting the families and making it very difficult and it's plain outright greed and it really affects me....It says on the state site that they were going to change it but they've only changed it for part of the prison. It's time for the cowboys to stop overcharging out there, it isn't fair to the people."

STORIES FROM FORMER PRISONERS IN MINNESOTA

Recorded by Open Access Connections and shared by Main Street Project

www.mag-net.org/digital-dialogues/phone-justice-policy-day-mn-prison-phone-stories

"I am a former inmate...the phone cards we buy from the county jail system don't work, or if they do work, one call takes the whole card....A [\$10 card] only gets you a 10 minute call....The prison system is even worse... **something needs to change.**"

"People would go without eating because they wanted to contact their family members."

"I was incarcerated, and I'm a single mom on a limited income and **while I was incarcerated I couldn't talk with my children...**they didn't know what was happening with me....A call from prison is very high, that's not right."

"I just got out a few days ago, I had some money in the bank...for emergencies and it had to go for phone time for me to be able to communicate with my family and attorney....Within a three-week period I have probably spent \$300 or so. It's quite difficult for inmates to be able to access their loved ones....There were guys who would sell their lunch tray or whatever...just to get phone time from another inmate....People would go without eating because they wanted to contact their family members....I pretty much depleted my savings on phone time."

Prison Legal News Research Summary

Why prison phone calls are brutally expensive for families.
How advocacy and policy change can lower the price.

This summary highlights findings from a 2011 research report by John E. Dannenberg for Prison Legal News, plus other information written for and about prison phone rates and communication rights.

This document is part of the 2011 Prison Phone Justice Action Kit, produced by Working Narratives, Human Rights Defense Center, Center for Media Justice, and other members of the Media Action Grassroots Network.

PRISON PHONE JUSTICE TOOLKIT

Quick and useful activist resources and media tools to lower the cost of prison phone calls.

www.PhoneJustice.org

REPORT TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1. Why Prison Phone Costs Are So High**
Corporate profits and government kickbacks
Sacrificing the benefits of family relationships for profit
- 2. Communication Injustice**
Telephones and the prison-industrial complex
Financial exploitation of low-income families
- 3. Stronger Families, Connected Communities, Human Rights**
Why prison phone access is vital public policy
Profile of a predator: Global Tel*Link
- 4. Success Stories**
How advocates and policymakers have reduced the rates
An activist story: Ivey Walton and FREE!
- 5. Prison Calls Can Be Cheaper**
Links to take action
Policy recommendations

WHY PRISON PHONE PRICES ARE SO HIGH: Corporate Profits and Government Kickbacks

Prison phone systems rake in money for corporations and prison systems, charging families up to 24 times more to speak with a person behind bars.

This overcharging happens across the prison phone market: juvenile facilities, private prisons, county jails, immigration detention, and federal and state prison.

Research published in 2011 by Prison Legal News found that price-gouging rates and tacked-on fees for state prison calls are not due to the cost of providing service, but are linked directly to the kickback “commissions” that the companies pay to prison agencies—a big-money percentage of the take.

Across 43 states, prison phone commissions for state prisons alone took \$152,000,000 out of the pockets of prisoners’ families.

“Up to 60% of what prisoners’ families pay to receive phone calls from their incarcerated loved ones has absolutely nothing to do with the cost of the phone service provided.”

—John E. Dannenberg, Prison Legal News

Often, prisons award the phone contract to the company who promises the highest kickback, not the lowest rates. **In the few states that have banned kickbacks, prison phone prices have dropped by 30% to 87%.**

Sacrificing the Benefits of Family Relationships for Profit

“Due to the perverse financial incentives and the political climate surrounding prisons and prisoners...neither the state nor the private entity acts in the best interests of the consumers in particular or of society in general.”

—Justin Carver, “An Efficiency Analysis of Contracts for the Provision of Telephone Services to Prisons,” *Federal Communications Law Journal*, 2002

“The nation is disadvantaged when prisoners are unable to maintain family ties that will help them succeed post-release. There is a widely known and researched correlation between prisoners who maintain contact with their families and those who are successful in staying out of prison after they are released.”

—Working Narratives, Prison Phone Justice Campaign Briefing, 2011

“Prison phone contracts are...a socially regressive, socioeconomic-based assault on prisoners’ families and the community as a whole.”

—John E. Dannenberg, *Prison Legal News*, 2011

COMMUNICATION INJUSTICE: Telephones and the Prison-Industrial Complex

Prison telephone systems are a moneymaker for prison agencies, telecommunications corporations, and the investment firms that profit off them.

This angle of the prison-industrial complex keeps incarcerated people from communicating with the outside world and blocks their access to legal advocates, health care, education, future employment, and loved ones.

The U.S. Prison Population in 2011 and Their Families:

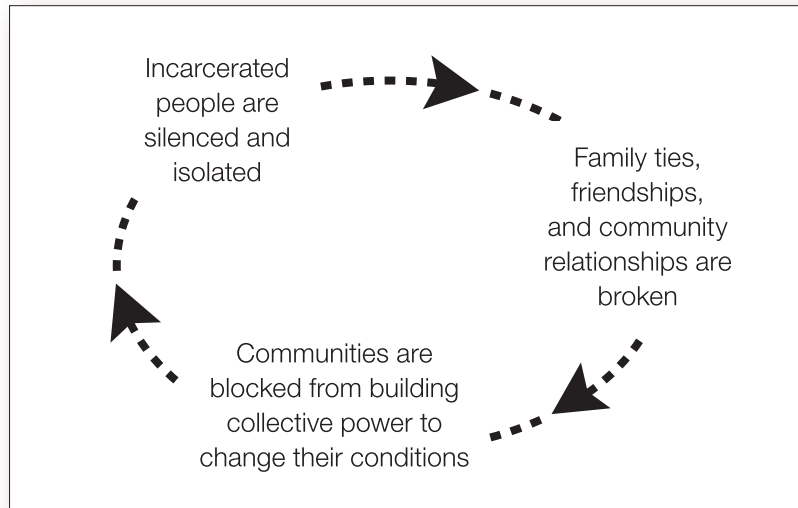
2.3 million people behind bars

- 1 in every 36 Latino men incarcerated
- 1 in every 25 Native American adults in the criminal justice system
- 1 in 9 Black men aged 20–35 incarcerated

2.7 million children with a parent behind bars

- 1 in 57 white children
- 1 in 28 Latino children
- 1 in 9 Black children

Institutionalized racism and a profits-before-people system criminalize the working poor and communities of color.



COMMUNICATION INJUSTICE: Financial Exploitation of Prisoners' Families

Poor people are denied protections and communication rights

- The inflated cost of calls creates financial hardships for families.
- Federal and state policies to make phone services affordable to low-income people don't include calls received from people in prison.

The state contracting process is often corrupt

- To award phone contracts, most prison agencies issue a "request for proposals," requiring bidders to offer kickback commissions to the state agency—on average 42% of all money collected from families.
- **The company offering the biggest kickback to the prison agency wins the contract, even when that jacks up prices for families.**

Kickbacks, added fees, and lack of regulation lead to charges of up to \$18.00 for a 15-minute long distance call:

- Companies pile on fees: A charge to add funds to the phone account, a fee to receive a bill, a fee for not using the account, plus a fee to close an account.
- Some companies refuse to refund account money that families have deposited, if the account goes unused for a few months.

Options to reduce the costs are rarely available

- Less expensive debit and/or prepaid collect calls are not available in many states.
- Companies may offer reduced evening and nighttime rates, but many prisoners aren't allowed to schedule calls at those times.
- Internet calling, calls to cell phones, and other lower-cost technologies are often blocked.

STRONGER FAMILIES, CONNECTED COMMUNITIES, HUMAN RIGHTS: Why Prison Phone Access is Necessary Public Policy

Families have fought back against exclusive expensive contracts as:

- an illegal, unfair tax levied on families who receive calls
- a violation of due process, equal protection, freedom of speech, and freedom of association
- monopolies and business/government deals that violate antitrust laws and consumers' rights to fair rates and service choice in a competitive market

Rehabilitation and survival require communication access

- Studies show strong family ties are **the key factor in successful return to the community**, reducing homelessness, unemployment, crime, and drug abuse after release.
- For those left behind, family contact during incarceration has been shown to reduce the strain of separation and **increase the likelihood of successful reunification**.
- Recent testimonials include a mother who **cannot gather support** for her son's parole because high phone costs cut him off from loved ones who could have helped.

People are pulled far away from communities

- Nearly all prisons built in the past 30 years are located in rural areas far from friends and families of prisoners. **Women are housed an average of 160 miles from their children**, while men are an average of 100 miles away.
- For parents with young children, and for the many imprisoned people with limited literacy, **phone calls are the primary means of maintaining relationships**.

Unaffordable phone costs cause problems inside jails and prisons

- Corrections officials cite phone access as essential for maintaining positive morale and motivation among prisoners, increasing safety inside, and **decreasing despair**.
- The problem of illegal cell phones inside is made worse by high rates for prison calls.
- Without communications, prisoners can not report on the conditions they experience.



PROFILE OF A PREDATOR: Global Tel*Link (GTL)

Global Tel*Link is the big shark in the prison and jail phone market. **More than half of the U.S. state prison systems now contract with a GTL firm.**

- GTL achieved market dominance by buying up prison and jail phone systems from AT&T, MCI WorldCom, Verizon, and DSI-ITI.
- In 2009, GTL was acquired by a subcompany of **Goldman Sachs**.
- In 2010 GTL's owners bought out PCS, a successful competing company that had charged lower phone rates in its prison contracts.
- In 2011, Goldman made a billion-dollar deal to sell GTL to another investment firm. Business analysts estimate that Goldman made more than 300% profit on the prison phone company.
- Comparing GTL contracts across the country, researchers found:

“... the higher rates charged in states where GTL pays commissions amounted to nothing more than price gouging and gross profiteering.”

—John E. Dannenberg, Prison Legal News 2011

SUCCESS STORIES: How Advocacy and Policy Reforms Have Reduced the Rates

Officials admit the importance of phone communications for rehabilitation and reintegration into the community, but the profiteering system continues to limit communications for families and silence prisoners.

It is the exhaustive work of groups supporting prisoners and their families that has broken through the system and created improvements.

Family groups nationwide have been fighting for over 20 years to stop abuses by phone companies and end kickbacks to prison systems.

State-level and federal campaigns require long-term work and multiple tactics. The multiyear national research into state prison phone contracts that Prison Legal News released in 2011 required extensive public information filings and lawsuits.

Families nationwide have continued to sue prison phone systems for violating constitutional rights and antitrust laws, despite legal setbacks and runarounds.

Phone justice advocacy is even more challenging for those in jails, private prisons, and juvenile and immigration facilities where it can be harder to sustain organizing.

Yet by combining grassroots uproar and public pressure, creative media campaigns, advocacy to policymakers, and sustained battles in the courts, grassroots campaigns have seen some wins:

- Lawmakers in eight states have banned kickbacks, plus four states and Washington D.C. have reduced commission levels, resulting in phone rates up to 87% lower.
- Public utility agencies in three states have required prison phone companies to pay fines or refund overcharges after illegally overbilling families.
- The Federal Bureau of Prisons reduced the cost of calls after a lawsuit brought by female prisoners on behalf of the free speech rights of all incarcerated people.

AN ACTIVIST STORY: Ivey Walton and FREE!

With a son and a nephew in prison, Ivey Walton became the lead plaintiff in a 2004 class action suit against NY State Department of Corrections phone rates.

Walton is a senior citizen and a founding member of FREE!—Families Rally for Emancipation and Empowerment.

For years, FREE! and their allies used a wide range of tactics to put pressure on policymakers.

A Victory!

In 2007 the New York governor ended state prison phone kickbacks, lowering the cost of calls by more than 50%.

The Walton lawyers continued a five-year battle in the courts to recover the money that the prison system and phone company MCI had taken from families. But in 2009, the New York high court shut down their case.



Ivey Walton, photo courtesy www.freefamilies.us

PRISON CALLS CAN BE CHEAPER

Without meaningful policy changes, the trends toward consolidation and deregulation of the prison phone industry will lead to more exploitation.

The FCC can fix the worst of the cost problems now.

Prisoners and family members submitted the Wright Petition to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 2003. Their proposal would cap phone costs at a reasonable rate and ensure fair options. They are still waiting for the FCC to act.

National coalitions are growing and rising.

The Media Action Grassroots Network (MAG-Net) has joined the Prison Phone Justice Campaign and National CURE in providing support for national and state-level activism on prison phone costs.

Telecom and media reform experts can help.

“Support from telecommunications advocates, coordinated with the efforts of those already working on this issue, would create a tipping point leading to a timely and lasting resolution for this important communication rights problem.”

—Dharma Dailey, research brief for the Media Justice Fund, April 2009

TAKE ACTION!

phonejustice.org

New quick and useful tools to help you:

- advocate to policymakers
- gather and share personal stories
- organize locally

ETCcampaign.org

Launched in 2000, the Equitable Telephone Charges campaign from CURE (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants) tracks the phone-rate issue and helps activists contact state regulators and lawmakers to demand debit-card calling and cheaper rates.

Policy Recommendations from Prison Legal News and the Prison Phone Justice campaign:

- Federal oversight and rate caps (pricing limits) are needed to keep communication lines open and rates affordable in all states. The FCC should pass the Wright Petition.
- States should set up closer regulation of prison phone corporations and lower caps on what companies can charge. State laws and regulations should ban kickbacks and set lower rates.
- Prison, jail, and detention systems should award contracts based on the lowest consumer price, allowing debit accounts and new technologies that increase affordability and access.

2011 RESEARCH SUMMARY: CREDITS AND SOURCES

This research summary was written by Aliza Dichter for the Center for Media Justice, based on the extensive, multiyear in-depth reporting by Prison Legal News.

Prison Legal News Nationwide Research: A Major Investigation

Prison Legal News (PLN) is a project of the Human Rights Defense Center. HRDC, founded in 1990 and based in Brattleboro, Vermont, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting human rights in U.S. detention facilities. HRDC publishes PLN, a monthly magazine that includes reports, reviews, and analysis of court rulings and news related to prisoners' rights and criminal justice issues. PLN has almost 7,000 subscribers nationwide and operates a website (www.PrisonLegalNews.org) that includes a comprehensive database of prison and jail-related articles, news reports, court rulings, verdicts, settlements, and related documents.

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"We Still Need to Stop the Contract," New York's FREE! (Families Rally for Emancipation and Empowerment). <http://www.freefamilies.us/node/329>

The Prison Industrial War

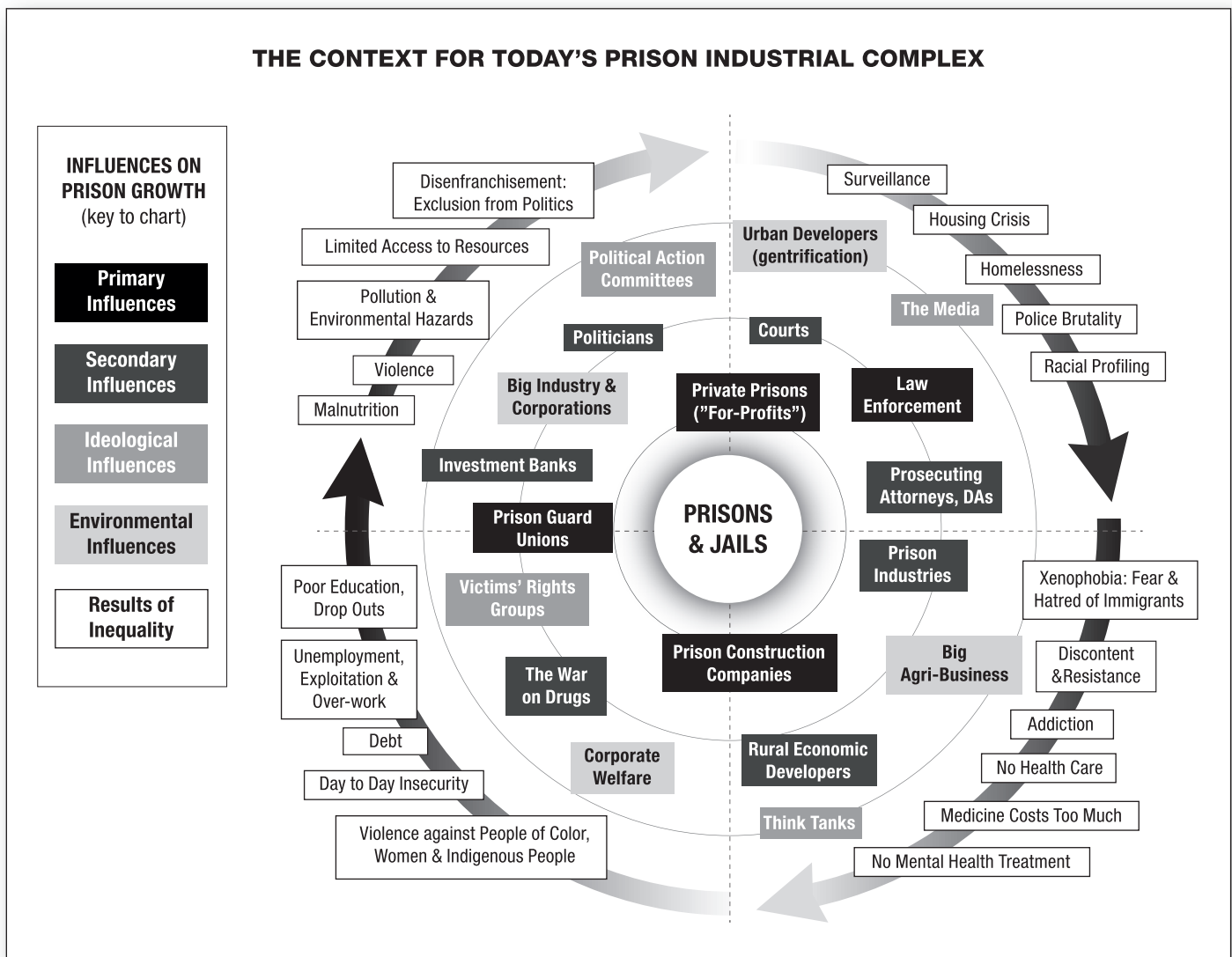
Mass incarceration means prison telephones are big business. Prison telephone industries have set up a system where:

- low-income families are financially exploited
- prisoners are silenced, isolated, and reimprisoned
- relationships are broken
- communities are blocked from building collective power to change their conditions

2.7 million children in the United States have an incarcerated parent.

1 in 28 Latino children and 1 in 9 Black children have a parent behind bars.

Corporations that profit off of excessive rates for telephone service from prison, jail and detention are part of the prison-industrial complex.



Clipped with permission from: correctionsproject.com.
 Visit correctionsproject.com for full interactive map and poster, plus other multimedia.
 Also see: Real Cost of Prisons Timeline: www.realcostofprisons.org/timeline.pdf.
 More infographics: www.usprisonculture.com/blog/category/data-visualization

Glossary

POLICIES AND ISSUES

- **Communication rights:** The power to communicate should belong to everyone. Traditional media reform and communications strategies are insufficient to address structural racism in public debate and policy. More is needed to create a media environment in which campaigns for racial justice, economic equity, and human rights can thrive. Communication rights is an approach dedicated to building strong and effective movements for justice and equity. A communications rights approach supports organizing groups to incorporate media as a tool to reclaim our stories, reframe our humanity, strengthen our campaigns, and determine our destinies.
- **Participatory communications:** Participatory communications is a framework for change communications and media advocacy that engages people at all levels of movement leadership. Strategic communications should not be the job of experts only. Everyone in a community-organizing group or campaign has a role to play in communicating the core messages, values, requests, and vision of the advocacy effort, and should be given the tools, training, and opportunity to participate in the process.
- **Commissions/kickbacks:** In most states, the agency operating the prison or jail gets a percentage of the money collected from expensive phone bills. The phone companies promise this kickback to win the service contract and then raise the phones rates in order to cover the commission and still make a profit.
- **[Phone] Contracts:** Prison phone rates and the companies that run the phone systems are set through a contract between the prison agency and the phone company. Typically, a prison agency puts out a Request for Proposals (RFP) outlining their phone service requirements. Phone companies bid to win the contract. Advocates can seek to change rates and amend current contracts, to block new contracts, or set conditions for upcoming contracts.
- **Collect and debit calls:** Collect calls are operator-assisted calls that require the person receiving the call to pay for expensive charges. Prison phone systems often require families to pay extra fees to set up accounts in order to receive calls. Debit calling can be a more affordable option that allows prisoners to prepay for a calls.
- **Price-gouging:** Charging excessive prices when a consumer has no alternative.
- **Profiteering:** Making excessive and unfair profits by manipulating prices in times of emergency or crisis. For prisoners and families with incarcerated loved ones, the importance of phone contact is exploited by companies getting rich through extremely high rates for service and added fees.
- **Wright Petition, Wright Proposal:** The Wright Petition was a set of recommendations filed with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 2003 by a group of prisoners, family members, and their allies seeking federal action to stop the prison phone overcharging. Many organizations contacted the FCC to urge the agency to accept the recommendations of the Wright Petition.

The District Court had ordered the FCC to address the issue after a 2000 lawsuit brought by Martha Wright and other prisoner family members, challenging the profiteering deals between prison/jail agencies and phone companies.

The Wright Proposal refers to an additional set of filings made to the FCC in 2007, after the agency still hadn't acted on the original petition. The petitioners sent an alternative proposal to the FCC, asking for reasonable limits on the rates a company can charge for an interstate call from prison and cheaper debit calling options. They are still waiting for a response.

AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

GOVERNMENT

- **FCC, Federal Communications Commission:** The FCC is the national U.S. agency responsible for supervising the companies that provide wired and wireless communications, including telephones, internet, wireless technology, and media. They decide issues of phone rates and services for interstate calls (across state lines). The mandate of the FCC is to make sure that affordable, quality communications are available to “all people of the United States, without discrimination.”
- **PUC, Public Utility Commission, Public Service Commission:** State agencies that oversee telecommunications and other utilities and who are responsible for ensuring that everyone in the state has access to emergency communications systems and affordable phone utilities. PUCs are supposed to set rate caps for local and in-state calls, provide for low-income service, and prevent monopolies and price extortion by companies.

ADVOCATES

- **CMJ, Center for Media Justice:** Founded in 2002, the Center for Media Justice is a dynamic communications strategy and media policy tank for grassroots organizations serving communities of color and America's poor. With offices in Oakland, Chicago, and New York, CMJ works to create media and cultural conditions that strengthen movements for racial justice, economic equity, and human rights. CMJ provides technical assistance to the PPJ Campaign.
- **ETC, Equitable Telephone Charges Campaign:** Launched in 2000, the ETC Campaign is a project of National CURE (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants), a grassroots membership organization founded in Texas in 1972 that became a national organization in 1985, led by former prisoners and family and friends of incarcerated people. The ETC Campaign has been fighting for fair telephone rates for the incarcerated nationwide and is based in Michigan.
- **MAG-Net, the Media Action Grassroots Network:** A local-to-local advocacy network of grassroots community organizations working together for media change to end poverty, eliminate racism, and ensure human rights. With over 100 member groups nationwide, regional chapters, an online action network, a media justice learning community, a strategic action fund, and collaborative campaigns, MAG-Net is coordinated by the Center for Media Justice.
- **Working Narratives:** Working Narratives is a national organization whose mission is to build the creative power of grassroots movements for social, economic, and racial justice. We believe that stories are a fundamental organizing principle in life, and in social movements. Through the strategic use of stories—including performance, radio, video, and other forms—movements build power, envision new democratic possibilities, and change culture and policy.

- **PPJ, Prison Phone Justice Campaign:** Founded in 2011, this campaign brings the local-to-local strength of the MAG-Net network and their media justice strategies into projects aimed at lowering the costs of calls from prison through national regulation and state policy change. The campaign is led by MAG-Net anchor group Working Narratives with technical assistance from the Center for Media Justice and Prison Legal News.
- **PLN, Prison Legal News, Human Rights Defense Center:** HRDC is a U.S. nonprofit organization founded in 1990 to protect human rights in U.S. Detention facilities. HRDC publishes the monthly magazine Prison Legal News.

COMPANIES

- **GTL, GlobalTel*Link:** The largest prison telecommunications company, GTL runs prison and jail phone systems in over half of the U.S. market. The mobile, Alabama-based company has recently been bought and sold by Wall Street investment firms, including Goldman Sachs, which have grown the company by buying up smaller companies and taking over their prison and jail contracts.
- **Securus:** Another of the largest detention phone companies, Securus is based in Dallas, Texas, and runs phone systems in 44 states. Created by a private investment firm that merged several smaller prison phone companies, Securus was recently sold to another multibillion dollar private equity firm.

Additional Resources

Web resources and tools supporting better communication access for incarcerated people

- **Why prison phone calls are brutally expensive for families, and how advocacy and policy change can lower the price. (PLN summary)**
www.phonejustice.org or on pages 30 to 36 of this toolkit
Summary of research published in 2011 by *Prison Legal News*:
 - Why prison phone costs are so high: corporate profiteering and government kickbacks.
 - How prison phone contracts cause widespread financial hardship for families.
 - The public policy need for prison phone access: stronger communities, human rights.
 - How advocates have reduced some rates. Urgent policy recommendations.
 - A profile of GlobalTel*Link, the corporation dominating the prison phone market.
- **Nationwide Survey Examines Prison Phone Contracts, Kickbacks**
http://prisonphonejustice.org/pdf/PLN_April_2011_cover_story_on_prison_phone_industry.pdf
Multiyear, in-depth investigative research by Prison Legal News exposing the widespread problem of overpriced prison phone systems, government commissions, and lack of regulation. State-by-state details on the policies, changes, and companies setting prison phone rates.
- **Prison Phone Fact Sheet: Consumers Union and Center for Media Justice**
http://mag-net.org/sites/default/files/Fact_Sheet_-_Prison_Phone_Calls.pdf
Prison phone services are important for family relationships, public safety, and post-release success. But due to complexity of regulations, the secretive nature of phone companies, and limited representation for prisoners, families as consumers, the industry has been able to hide these predatory practices from public scrutiny.
- **State-by-State Information on Prison Phone Rates and Policies**
Rates and companies by state: www.etccampaign.com/rates.php
Overview of differences across states: www.etccampaign.com/rates.php
Decisions by administrators, legislators, and newspapers: www.etccampaign.com/progress.php
Since 2000, The ETC (Equitable Telephone Charges) Campaign of National CURE (Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants) has tracked state prison phone companies, rates, and policy developments nationwide. Volunteers maintain the data, so please contact with any updates.
- **Pay or Be Silent: Families Survive the High Price of Prison Telephone Rates**
<http://ccrjustice.org/learn-more/reports/pay-or-be-silent%3A-families-survive-high-price-prison-telephone-rates>
A brief 2009 report from the New York Campaign for Telephone Justice showed that an exploitative prison phone contract caused lasting, ongoing financial hardship for communities. Many families paid \$2500 or more over 11 years before the contract was stopped, with some reporting bills totaling over \$15,000. Families had to choose between talking with incarcerated loved ones or paying bills, making mortgage payments, buying food, accessing health care, and maintaining medical insurance. The survey found repeated accounts of higher debt, lower savings, and families forced into bankruptcy.

- Criminal Charges: Excessive Prison Phone Rates Take a Toll on Innocent Families (Funding Exchange report)**
http://www.mediajusticefund.org/assets/395_mjfprisonphonesfinal.pdf
 In this 5-page brief for the Media Justice Fund in 2009, Dharma Dailey reports that excessive phone rates are “one of the most widespread human rights abuses confronting people imprisoned and their families,” and recommends that action from telecommunications advocates, partnered with those already working on the issue, could lead to a solution.
- Frequently Asked Questions: Debunking the Myths on Prison Phone Issues**
<http://ccrjustice.org/learn-more/faqs/faqs%3A-prison-phone-rates>
 The Center for Constitutional Rights explains why reasonable prison phone rates are necessary and that it is possible to change bad contracts. Questions and answers respond to false claims by industry opposition and questions from skeptics.

LEGAL AND POLICY DOCUMENTS: Extensive research and legal citations supporting policy changes to reduce prison phone rates

- From the Sentencing Project and 18 other criminal justice, legal advocacy, and civil rights organizations:**
 Federal (FCC) filing: http://66.29.139.159/pdf/FCC_Comments_2007.pdf
 NY State Court filing: http://66.29.139.159/pdf/Amicus%20Brief_Telephone%20Justice%20New%20York.pdf
- The Ad-Hoc Coalition for the Right to Communicate**
<http://www.brennancenter.org/content/resource/FCCPrisonPhoneRates>
 The Brennan Center filed comments in 2004 and 2007 with the FCC on behalf of a broad coalition of family members, religious leaders, educators, attorneys, and social service providers who communicate regularly with those behind bars and thus bear the burden of paying the excessive cost of collect calls from prison. More than 60 organizations and individuals were included in the coalition.
- Database of legal articles and documents on phone access from Prison Legal News:**
www.PrisonPhoneJustice.org/articles
- American Bar Association: Resolution on Prison Phone Rates and Access**
http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publishing/criminal_justice_section_newsletter/crim-just_policy_am05115b.authcheckdam.pdf
 With extensive research and legal references, this ABA position paper concludes that it is the responsibility of the legal, law-enforcement, corrections, national-security and public-policy components of the government to lower prison phone rates and “to afford prison and jail inmates reasonable opportunity to maintain telephonic communication with the free community.” (Published 2005, reaffirmed in federal filings in 2010.)
- Ex-Communication: Competition and Collusion in the U.S. Prison Telephone Industry (Academic, Economic, and Communication Policy Research)**
<http://prisonphonejustice.org/ArticleDetails.aspx?ID=18793>
 This 2005 academic paper by Steven Jackson on prison phone industry economics finds that exorbitant prices and monopoly contracts have “turned the prison telephone sector into a lucrative and largely invisible growth center for the U.S. telecommunication industries as a whole,”—despite the fact that this market practice is unfair to consumers and bad social policy.

GENERAL RESEARCH SUPPORTING LOWER PHONE RATES

- **Families Left Behind: The Hidden Cost of Incarceration and Reentry**
http://www.urban.org/uploadedpdf/310882_families_left_behind.pdf
The high cost of calls is one of the many barriers to successful reentry and family reunification, according to 2005 research from the Urban Institute Justice Policy Center.
- **Collateral Costs: Incarceration's Racist Effect on Economic Mobility**
http://www.pewtrusts.org/uploadedFiles/wwwpewtrustsorg/Reports/Economic_Mobility/Collateral%20Costs%20FINAL.pdf
A 2010 report from the Pew Economic Mobility Project details how the U.S. incarceration system traps communities in worsening cycles of poverty for generations, especially for communities of color. Statistics include: There are 2.3 million adults behind bars, and 2.7 million children have an incarcerated parent: one in 9 black children, 1 in 28 Hispanic children, and 1 in 57 white children have a parent behind bars.
- **Making Family Reunification a Reality for Incarcerated Women**
http://66.29.139.159/pdf/Recommendations_2005.pdf
From the Women's Advocacy Project's 2005 policy recommendations: "Incarcerated mothers don't have the resources they need (such as access to information and telephones) to make decisions about their child's medical care. Often they are not given the opportunity to make these decisions.... Corrections should review their regulations in regards to mail, phone calls, and visitation, to ensure that they are family-friendly and do not have a negative impact on parents trying to maintain family relationships and retain custody of their children."
- **Children, Families, and the Criminal Justice System: Research Brief**
http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/college/research_public_service/files/familyconnections.pdf
"Family connections and other social networks impact not only families' and children's well-being but the achievement of social goals such as the reduction of crime and the building of vibrant communities," states this 2044 brief from the Jane Addams Center for Social Policy and Research, University of Illinois at Chicago, which recommends reducing the expensive cost of prison calls to help maintain important family connections.
- **American Bar Association: Resolution on Importance of Communication between Incarcerated Parents and Their Children**
http://www2.americanbar.org/sdl/Documents/2010_MY_102E.pdf
Extensive research and legal documentation in this 2010 ABA position paper on the importance of policies, including reduced phone rates, to support communications and contact between children and their incarcerated parents.
- **Phone Issues Beyond Cost: Communication Management Units**
http://www.brennancenter.org/content/resource/GMU_letter/
The Brennan Center filed this 2010 letter with the Federal Bureau of Prisons regarding the issue of "communication management units" and the problems with the proposed rules for prisoner communications. "Overly harsh restrictions on communications can undermine prison order, cause higher rates of recidivism, and exact a high cost on inmates and their families."

CURRENT NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS:

National CURE ETC Campaign: www.ETCcampaign.com

Media Action Grassroots Network: www.MAG-Net.org

Working Narratives: www.phonejustice.org

Partial list of groups who have officially petitioned the government or the courts to end unfair prison phone rates:

- Addictions Coalition of Delaware
- Advocare, Inc.
- American Bar Association
- Arizona Coalition for Effective Government
- Brennan Center for Justice, NYU School of Law
- Bronx Defenders
- The Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition
- The Center for Appellate Litigation
- Center For Community Alternatives
- Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants – Virginia, Inc.
- The Committee for Public Counsel Services
- The Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project
- The Correctional Association of New York
- Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants
- The Criminal Justice Policy Foundation
- Defender Legal Services Division of the National Legal Aid and Defender Association
- The Defender Policy Group
- The Defending Immigrants Partnership
- The Equal Justice Initiative of Alabama
- Families in Crisis, Inc.
- Family and Corrections Network
- The Female Offenders Re-entry Program of Lebanon County
- The Fortune Society
- The Justice Fellowship
- Justice Policy Institute
- Justice Works!
- Legal Action Center
- The Lewisburg Prison Project
- The Maryland Justice Policy Institute
- The Metropolitan Public Defender's Office
- The Montclair (New Jersey) Alumni Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.
- NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc.
- The National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- The National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates
- National Association of Women Judges
- National Coalition for Full Opportunity for Felons
- The National Council of La Raza
- National/New York Associations of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services
- NuLeadership Policy Group (NuLPG)
- The NYC Office of the Appellate Defender
- The Osborne Association
- Parolee Human Rights Project of the New York
- The Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project
- The Prison Show
- City Aids Housing Network
- The Real Cost of Prisons Project
- The Sentencing Project
- Southern Tier Advocacy & Mitigation Project
- The Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- The Washington Defender Association
- The Women's Prison Association
- Voice of the Ex-Offender