

For Immediate Release
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**MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
ORDERS
TAP SURCHARGE REDUCTION,
INCREASE IN BENEFITS TO LOW-INCOME CUSTOMERS**

St. Paul, Minnesota – This week, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission implemented changes to Minnesota’s Telephone Assistance Program (TAP) that reduced the cost of the program to all landline telephone customers in the State yet increased benefits to qualified customers. The Commission ordered the TAP surcharge to be cut in half from \$0.06 to \$0.03 per month and the TAP benefit to be increased from \$2.50 to \$3.50 per month. Customers will see the changes beginning on October 1.

TAP provides a discount in the form of a monthly credit on low-income customers' landline telephone bills. The eligibility requirements are the same as the federal Lifeline program. Customers qualify if their income is at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines or if they participate in any of several public assistance programs, including Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). The program is funded by a monthly surcharge on all landline telephone lines in Minnesota.

The program helps Minnesotans who need phone service to call 911 during emergencies, coordinate child care, and search for employment. Access to local emergency services and community resources is vital to low-income and elderly residents.

“The Commission’s actions ensure that those who truly are in need of a telephone have access to today’s world,” said Beverly Jones Heydinger, Chair of the Public Utilities Commission. “Nonetheless, we wanted to reduce the cost of this program to all landline customers in Minnesota as much as possible while still maintaining an appropriate level of benefits.”

Including today’s order, over the last two years the Commission has doubled the TAP credit and reduced the cost to Minnesota telephone customers by more than half. In a June 7, 2011 Order, the Commission reduced the TAP surcharge from \$0.07 to \$0.06 and increased the TAP credit from \$1.75 to \$2.50.

More information on the TAP program, qualifications, and how to apply can be found on the Commission's website at: www.puc.state.mn.us/puc/consumers/telephone-discounts. The discount is available for anyone who is eligible. If a customer thinks they may qualify, they should contact their local phone service provider to apply. Questions about the program can be directed to the Commission's Consumer Affairs Office at 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782.

Information about the current TAP program changes can be found in Docket CI-13-213, which is available on the Commission's website via the Commission's eDockets system.