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### PSC SETS RATE CAPS FOR OPERATOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

The state Public Service Commission yesterday capped the rates that operator service providers can charge payphone and other public phone users for their in-state collect, third-party billed and calling card calls. Operator service providers are the companies that connect and bill for calls placed from public phones.

The PSC established the maximum allowable rates for each type of call category by averaging the operator service and intrastate toll rates of US West, AT&T, MCI and Sprint and adding 50 percent to each averaged rate. If an operator service provider bills a customer more than the allowable rate set by the PSC, a new law passed by the 1999 Legislature allows the customer to sue the company for three times the cost of the call or \$500, whichever is greater.

The maximum allowable rates are:

Operator-dialed calling card \$3.74

Collect call \$4.86

Third-party billed \$5.05

Person-to-person \$8.48

Operator-dialed called number (surcharge) \$1.61

Customer-dialed calling card, company card \$1.37

Customer-dialed calling card, non-company card \$1.69

InterLATA per minute long-distance rate \$ .66

IntraLATA per minute long-distance rate \$ .51

In addition to the price protection afforded by the rate caps, PSC rules also require that an operator service provider:

- Disclose to the customer at no charge and before connecting the call that by dialing one or two digits or by remaining on the line the customer can find out what the total cost of the call will be.
- Permit the customer to hang up and incur no charge before the call is connected.
- Provide its name on customers' phone bills, as well as a toll-free telephone number for billing questions.

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