



OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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INMATE PHONE CALLS

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You asked several questions about inmate phone calls. We answer each question separately below.

1. WHY ARE CONNECTICUT INMATE PHONE CALL RATES HIGHER THAN RATES FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC?

The state contracts with Global Tel*Link Corp., a telephone company, to provide inmate phone services. According to the Department of Correction (DOC), the state's contract with Global Tel*Link expired in July 2011 but was extended for up to three years or until the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) negotiates a new contract, whichever occurs first. The Department Information Technology was formerly responsible for negotiating the contract but recent legislation merged the agency into DAS.

Calling rates are set in the contract negotiated with the vendor. Currently, inmates can make collect calls or use a debit or prepaid calling system. According to DOC, rates charged for inmate calls are higher than collect call rates for the general public because additional technology is required to manage the inmate phone system. Among other things, DOC states that this technology must verify that a number is on an inmate's allowable call list, provide notices to callers (e.g., that the call is from a prison and will be monitored), enforce time limits for calls, track data about calls, record calls, and allow live monitoring of calls.

2. WHAT RATES ARE INMATES CHARGED IN SELECTED STATES AND WHAT IS THE RATE FOR A 15-MINUTE OUT-OF-STATE CALL?

We collected information on inmate phone rates from the states you requested. These states allow inmates to make collect or debit or prepaid calls. Different rates apply based on which type of call is made and whether the call is local, in-state, or out-of-state. Table 1 compares these rates, broken down by collect and debit or pre-paid calls and whether the call is local, in-state, or out-of-state.

Table 1: Inmate Phone Call Rates in Selected States

	Collect Calls			Debit/Pre-Paid Calls		
	Local	In-State	Out-of State	Local	In-State	Out-of State
Connecticut	\$2.00	\$1.75 + \$0.12 to \$0.23 per minute depending on the distance	\$3.95 + \$0.89 per minute	\$1.50	\$1.31 + \$0.09 to \$0.18 per minute depending on the distance	\$2.96 + \$0.6675 per minute
Massachusetts	\$.86 + \$.10 per minute	\$.86 + \$.10 per minute	\$.86 + \$.10 per minute	\$.65 + \$.075 per minute	\$.65 + \$.075 per minute	\$.65 + \$.075 per minute
New Hampshire	\$1.20 + \$.10 per minute after the first five minutes	\$1.20 + \$.10 per minute	\$1.20 + \$.10 per minute	\$.50 + \$.10 per minute after the first five minutes	\$.15 per minute	\$.15 per minute
New Jersey	\$.33 per minute	\$.33 per minute	\$.33 per minute	\$.33 per minute	\$.33 per minute	\$.33 per minute
New York	\$.048 per minute	\$.048 per minute	\$.048 per minute	\$.048 per minute	\$.048 per minute	\$.048 per minute

Sources: Connecticut DOC; Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New Jersey corrections websites; and V Connect Service website (under contract with New York for prison phone services): <http://www.myvconnect.com/NY.aspx>.

Table 2 compares a 15 minute out-of-state collect and debit or pre-paid call by an inmate in these states.

Table 2: Fifteen Minute Out-of-State Call by Inmates in Selected States

	Collect Calls	Debit/Pre-Paid
Connecticut	\$17.30	\$12.97
Massachusetts	2.36	1.78
New Hampshire	2.70	2.25
New Jersey	4.95	4.95
New York	.72	.72

3. HAVE THERE BEEN ANY BILLS IN CONNECTICUT ON THIS TOPIC RECENTLY?

Since 2008, we found four bills in Connecticut related to inmate phone calls. In 2008, Proposed Bill 5277 would have required the contract for inmate phone services to charge inmate rates that are no greater than the costs for comparable calls outside of prison. Another bill in 2008 (HB 5917) and two bills in 2009 (Proposed Bill 6171 and HB 6533) would have established a Department of Correction Advisory Commission to study, among other things, prison telephone service contracts.

All four bills were referred to the Judiciary Committee. The committee held a public hearing on two of the advisory commission bills (HB 5917 in 2008 and HB 6533 in 2009). None of the bills were voted out of committee.

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