

Dear Editor:

Many of us take for granted that we can pick up our phone, dial our friends and family, and stay connected with the rest of the world. Phone service has become such a routine part of our lives that we hardly even think about it anymore.

But imagine what it would be like if you were suddenly laid off from your job and couldn't afford to pay your phone bill. Imagine if you worked one or two jobs and barely made enough to pay the rent and had to sacrifice telephone service.

Unfortunately, too many people in the U.S. and in Georgia face this problem every day and do not have even basic telephone service. In Georgia we know that many people cannot afford any kind of telephone service and are disconnected from friends, family, and emergency services. These consumers cannot even dial 911.

There is good news, though. Many of these consumers may qualify for two assistance programs—Lifeline and Link-Up—that discount a portion of their telephone service. Lifeline provides qualified consumers savings up to \$13.50 on basic monthly telephone service and Link-Up can pay for one-half of the initial installment or activation fees for telephone and/or wireless service.

We know there are thousands of Georgians who qualify for these discounts but are not taking advantage of them. Consumers should apply directly to their local telephone provider to see if they qualify.

The Georgia Public Service Commission is participating with our national organization, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners, and the Federal Communications Commission to raise awareness of, and participation in, these important programs.

Our goal is to connect as many people as possible. We hope that by raising awareness of Lifeline and Link-Up, we can ensure that more consumers can call their friends, their families, and life-saving services. In today's highly interconnected world, no one should be left out.

For more information, contact the Commission at 404-656-4501 (within metro Atlanta) or 1-800-282-5813 (outside metro Atlanta) and visit our web site at www.psc.state.ga.us.

Stan Wise
Chairman
Georgia Public Service Commission