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NEWS RELEASE

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Georgia Public Service Commission Adopts Telephone Lifeline Rules

ATLANTA, January 15, 2013—Today, on a 3 to 2 vote, the Georgia Public Service Commission adopted rules governing Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) and issued a proposal to make further changes to the Lifeline service rules.

The new rules, which take effect 20 days after being filed with the Georgia Secretary of State, will impose several regulations on these carriers. ETCs will be required to charge at least \$5.00 per month to each telephone customer receiving the Lifeline discount. The minimum charge is intended to reduce waste, fraud, and abuse in the Lifeline Program by discouraging customers from having multiple Lifeline phones and deterring ETCs from signing up unqualified customers for this service. "I commend Commissioner Everett for his effort to reduce the abuse of this subsidy," said Tim Echols. "It is our job to make tough decisions that balance compassion with fiscal stewardship."

Other changes include notifying customers of their right to file complaints with the Public Service Commission and posting the ETC's lowest cost service offering in all Lifeline advertisements.

In a related action, the Commission issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to make two additional rule changes: 1) require ETCs to "bill and collect" the \$5.00 fee instead of merely "charging" the fee; and 2) eliminate the requirement that carriers review and retain a copy of customers' photo identification for three years. Interested parties may file comments on or before February 7, 2013, on these two changes prior to the PSC's considering adoption at its regularly scheduled Administrative Session on February 19, 2013.

ETCs are phone companies authorized to receive funding under the federal High Cost Program, the federal Low-Income Program, or both. High Cost funding is used to extend telecommunications services to rural and low-density areas that are

more costly to serve. Low-income funding is used to provide discounted telephone service, known as "Lifeline," to qualifying individuals.

For more information about Docket No. 35537 you can go to the PSC website at www.psc.state.ga.us.

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