



Georgia Public Service Commission

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Nathan Deal Proclaims September 14-20, 2015 as Lifeline Awareness Week in Georgia

ATLANTA, September 8, 2015 – Governor Nathan Deal has joined with the Georgia Public Service Commission (Commission) in proclaiming September 14-20, 2015 as National Lifeline Awareness Week in Georgia. Access to local emergency services and community resources is vital to all residents. Lifeline helps low-income consumers connect to the nation’s communications networks, find jobs, access health care services, connect with family, and call for help in an emergency. For some, a local phone can be the difference between social connection and complete isolation. Under the federal Lifeline program, telephone customers who participate or are eligible for certain public assistance programs are entitled to receive a basic telephone service discount of at least \$9.25 per month. More information on program eligibility, rules and key messages is available at <http://www.fcc.gov/lifeline/outreach>.

“We want to make eligible Georgians aware of this program which can provide this crucial link to services and family in times of need,” said Commission Chairman Chuck Eaton. Lifeline Awareness week is a nationwide program between the Commission, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) and the Federal Communications Commission to publicize the Lifeline Program.

As of June 30, 2015, there are 433,641 Georgians who are receiving this credit but there are thousands more who could qualify but are not signed up. A consumer is automatically qualified to receive the Lifeline discount if he or she currently participates in any one of the following programs: Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Supplemental Security Income, Federal Public Housing Assistance (Section 8), Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, National School Lunch Program's free lunch program; or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or senior citizens discount from power or gas company. A consumer, whose household income is equal to or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a household of that size, will also qualify for the discount.

“I am pleased with the federal government’s emphasis on strictly enforcing eligibility for this important program. We have been able to reduce duplicate and fraudulent Lifeline accounts in Georgia by 60 percent over the past two years,” said Commissioner Doug Everett.

The Lifeline program has undergone a transformation in recent years to improve program efficiency and combat waste, fraud and abuse to ensure that only those eligible are receiving this vital support. Program rules and requirements that consumers should know include:

- Lifeline is available only to eligible consumers.
- Only low-income consumers with proof of eligibility are qualified to enroll.

- Only one Lifeline benefit is permitted per household. Federal rules prohibit consumers from receiving more than one Lifeline service. If a consumer or his or her household currently has more than one Lifeline discounted service, they must select a single provider immediately or be subject to penalties.
- Existing Lifeline subscribers must recertify their eligibility every year and should respond to their Lifeline providers' attempts to recertify eligibility. Subscribers must verify that they remain eligible to participate in the Lifeline program once each calendar year. Subscribers who fail to recertify their eligibility will be de-enrolled from the Lifeline Program.

To sign up, consumers should contact their prospective telecommunications provider. Consumers should be aware that not all providers offer the Lifeline discount and should contact any potential provider before making a commitment. Consumers can find more information at: <http://www.fcc.gov/lifeline/outreach>. Consumers can find Lifeline providers by State (www.lifelinesupport.org) and a Lifeline Eligibility pre-screening tool (<http://www.lifelinesupport.org/ls/am-i-eligible.aspx>).

NARUC is the national association representing the state public service commissioners who regulate essential utility services in their states. NARUC members are responsible for assuring reliable utility service at fair, just, and reasonable rates. Founded in 1889, the Association is an invaluable resource for its members and the regulatory community, providing a venue to set and influence public policy, share best practices, and foster innovative solutions to improve regulation.

The Georgia Public Service Commission is a five-member constitutional agency that exercises its authority and influence to ensure that consumers receive safe, reliable, and reasonably-priced telecommunications, electric and natural gas service from financially viable and technically competent companies.

For more information on the Commission, see the Commission web site at www.psc.state.ga.us.

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