

**NEWS RELEASE****GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

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WINDOW OPENS FOR SCHOOLS AND LIBRARIES TO APPLY FOR TELECOMMUNICATION DISCOUNTS

ATLANTA -- A 75 day window begins today for schools and libraries throughout Georgia to apply for discounts of 20 to 90% on telecommunications services, internet access and network equipment.

The federal Universal Service Fund provides up to \$2.25 billion a year to subsidize telecommunications services for schools and libraries. The fund will provide \$625 million worth of discounts for the first half of 1998. "Schools and libraries throughout Georgia will benefit from this fund. All systems will receive savings of at least 20%, with the poorest systems receiving discounts up to 90%," said Public Service Commissioner Dave Baker, who is a member of the FCC Federal-State Universal Service Joint Board, which oversees the fund. Eligibility for the discounts is based upon the percentage of students eligible for the national Free and Reduced Lunch Program (FRLP), and whether a location is urban or rural based on metropolitan statistical areas. Georgia Department of Education officials believe the average discount to be awarded to Georgia schools will be in the 72% range.

In July, 1997, the Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) adopted an FCC schedule of discounts which ensures that all eligible schools, libraries and health care providers throughout Georgia have affordable telecommunications services. The plan also created a \$400 million fund to lower the prices paid by rural health care providers for telecommunications services. Payments are not made directly to the institutions, but rather to companies that offer the discounted services.

Services eligible for discount include:

Basic Phone Service; Leased data circuits; T-1, 56kbs, Isdn data lines; Dial-up Internet Access; Direct Internet connections; E-mail; Wireless connections

Internal connections eligible for discount:

Telecommunications wiring; Routers; Switches; Hubs; Network Servers, Software; Installation and basic maintenance

Beginning Friday, January 30 through April 14, 1998, applications will be accepted on an equal basis by the School and Library Corporation (SLC), a subsidiary of the Universal Service Administration Corporation (USAC) set up by the FCC. After April 14, applications will be processed on a first-come, first-serve basis. Application information can be obtained through the SLC web site at www.slcfund.org, or by calling the "e-rate" hotline at 1-800-733-6860. Projected discounts by county can be found on the

"news" page of the PSC web site at www.psc.state.ga.us.

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