

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 17, 1998**CONTACT:** Shawn Davis, Public Information Officer
(404) 656-6558 or 1-800-282-5813

PHONE SURCHARGE FOR HEARING IMPAIRED SERVICES DECREASED BY \$8 MILLION

ATLANTA -- Beginning May 1, 1998, telephone services for the hearing and speech impaired will be enhanced while the price tag for consumers is reduced by over \$8 million. The Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) today reduced the surcharge paid by telephone customers from 16 cents per month per access line to 10 cents.

Since 1991, telephone customers have been paying a surcharge per line for maintenance of the Georgia Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS). A keyboard device called a text-telephone (TTY) gives people with hearing loss or speech disabilities a means of communicating with people who use a standard telephone.

Due to the recent bidding process for a new TRS service provider, in which the PSC awarded AT&T a three-year contract to continue providing the services, the cost will be reduced while the services will be greatly improved.

"The TRS system has been a vital communication link for the over 500,000 Georgians and 22 million people nationwide with hearing or speech impairments and we are delighted that competition among the service providers has brought the cost for the service even lower," said Commissioner Bobby Baker.

The TRS surcharge to each line will be reduced from 16 cents per month to 10 cents; an estimated savings of \$8,390,400 over the 36-month contract period. Additionally, AT&T will be providing new features to customers such as *Turbo Code* and *Speech to Speech*. Turbo Code enables the conversation to flow at a more natural pace while Speech to Speech greatly improves the ability of speech-impaired persons to communicate.

Calls using these services can be placed 24 hours a day, seven days a week--even on holidays, and will be handled by one of the 10 AT&T telecommunications relay centers in the United States, including one in Norcross.

###

[Note: AT&T Contact is Bryant Steele, 404-810-7455]