

**GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

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**PSC SHUTS DOWN LONG DISTANCE COMPANIES FOR SLAMMING**

ATLANTA -- The Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) Tuesday revoked the certificates of three long distance companies for switching consumers' long distance services without their consent - the practice known as slamming.

As a result of Tuesday's ruling, Business Discount Plan, Inc, Discount Network Services, Inc. and Minimum Rate Pricing, Inc. may no longer offer in-state long distance services to Georgians.

"Competition has lowered the rates we all pay for long distance services," said PSC Chairman Bobby Baker. "However, there are some isolated companies which are not acting in the best interest of Georgians. I hope today's action sends a message to other long distance companies that the PSC won't tolerate what amounts to consumer fraud," said Baker.

Since September of last year, the PSC Office of Consumer Affairs received 136 slamming complaints against Business Discount Plan, Inc., 26 against Discount Network Services, and 70 against Minimum Rate Pricing.

Earlier this year the General Assembly passed legislation imposing tougher penalties against telephone companies that slam. Slamming complaints at the PSC have escalated from less than 200 in 1995 to nearly 2000 last year.

Under provisions of H.B.1130, which took effect July 1, 1998, telephone companies are given ninety days to resolve a consumer's slamming complaint. If the offending company has not issued a refund entitled to the consumer within that ninety day period, consumers can sue the company in their local courts for up to three times the amount the consumer lost in rate differences. Telephone companies can now be fined up to \$15,000 per slamming violation.

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