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MDOC Prison Phone Call Costs Drastically Reduced

JACKSON – Effective today, the cost of prison phone calls in Mississippi is decreasing by more than 50 percent.

The cost per minute is dropping from 22 cents per minute to 11 cents and associated fees are being eliminated or reduced.

“We receive constant complaints from inmate family members and others regarding the high cost for phone service,” Commissioner Marshall Fisher said. “This decision will significantly reduce expenses to the families.”

The rate drop is the second action under Fisher’s administration to decrease direct costs to inmates’ families. In September, commissary prices were cut by 24.44 percent.

The Mississippi Department of Corrections is adopting the per-minute cap the Federal Communications Commission set last year for debit and prepaid interstate and intrastate calls. Also, per call fees were eliminated among other measures adopted.

For example, a 10-minute call will now cost \$1.10 rather than \$4.80. The cost of a 20-minute call will drop from \$7 to \$2.20.

The lower phone rate also means MDOC is losing a major source of money for the fund established and maintained for inmates’ benefit, known as the Inmate Welfare Fund.

MDOC uses commissions from telephone revenues and inmate commissary for the Inmate Welfare Fund, which pays for services, supplies and equipment toward inmates’ educational, recreational and programmatic needs.

“The Inmate Welfare Fund will be significantly reduced because of the change in phone rates,” Fisher said.

Phone commissions were \$1,469,454 in the last year. Inmates made 585,286 calls.

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