

**Opening Comments by National Sheriffs' Association at  
Federal Communications Commission Workshop:  
*Reforming Inmate Calling Service Rates*  
July 10, 2013, Washington, DC**

- **First, let me begin by saying that the National Sheriffs' Association supports any FCC rulemaking "to ensure just and reasonable Inmate Calling Services rates." As elected officials, Sheriffs are sworn to SERVE and to PROTECT their communities...every member of their communities. This, however, is a balancing act in regards to inmate calling services.**

**Sheriffs recognize that continuity of communications between inmates and their families — mothers, fathers, spouses, children — is vitally important, and can also be a positive influence for an inmate's re-integration into society after their release from incarceration. But, Sheriffs — who operate 80% of the jails in this country — also have public safety responsibilities; and there are dangerous individuals in jails who use inmate calling services to contact their victims, and witnesses to their crime; plan escapes; and exploit telephone privileges to continue their criminal activities while incarcerated.**

**Thus, while the National Sheriffs' Association supports just and reasonable**

**Inmate Calling Service rates, one cannot compare the cost of a monitored telephone call from inside a jail to the cost of unlimited, long-distance monthly calling plans outside of a correctional setting.**

**There are jail staffing costs for providing and monitoring — sometimes real-time monitoring — inmate calling services; and, these calling systems can be highly sophisticated: blocking inmate calls to certain numbers; detecting calls to the same number by multiple inmates; authenticating voice recognition before an inmate can make a call; etc. In short, there are unique and substantial costs to learning about and securely operating a telephone system inside a correctional facility.**

**Furthermore, in establishing just and reasonable rates, one cannot lump all correctional settings — jails and prisons — together. A one size fits all is not just and reasonable when jails and prisons differ in their population size, and thus, the size of the calling service system; and in the frequency of their population turnover.**

- Second, the National Sheriffs' Association supports transparency in all the costs and so-called “commissions,” pejoratively referred to as “kickbacks,”**

**associated with inmate calling service rates. In this regard, again, one must not neglect to take into consideration, and calculation, the substantial costs for jails associated with establishing, maintaining, and updating inmate calling service systems. The so-called “commissions” are used by jails as “cost recovery” mechanisms to recoup the administration costs of inmate calling services. In addition, depending on the locality, part of the so called “commissions” are used for jail inmate welfare and benefit programs.**

**For example, unlike the State prisons in California, local county jails in that State do not receive funding to provide such welfare and benefits to inmates as recreation supplies, education and vocations programs, prisoner-re-entry services, etc. These benefits are provided by the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Office via the revenue-sharing negotiated contracts between the Sheriff’s Office and the ICS Service Providers.**

- Third, and finally, the National Sheriffs’ Association is committed to working in partnership with the FCC, inmate families, and calling service providers to ensure just and reasonable Inmate Calling Service rates. AND, in this work to ensure just and reasonable rates, we ask that you also**

**partner with the National Sheriffs' Association to help us ensure public safety, including safety for the staff and inmates of jails.**