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Consumers need to know about Lifeline telephone discount program

WASHINGTON – Sept. 10, 2010 – The National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA) is participating in a nationwide effort to encourage consumers to learn more about discounted telephone service. The week of Sept. 13, 2010, has been designated as National Telephone Discount Lifeline Awareness Week. The effort includes federal, state and local agencies and organizations, including non-profit and community-based groups.

With household budgets stretched, utility consumer advocates nationwide are working to increase public awareness of Lifeline and Link-Up telephone assistance programs. Both federal programs offer payment assistance for telephone service, making it more affordable for eligible consumers to stay connected or get reconnected.

“Consumers need to know about the Lifeline program, especially given the tough economy,” said Mary Healey, president of NASUCA and consumers’ counsel for the state of Connecticut. “The federal Lifeline and Link-Up programs are a resource that eligible consumers can tap to make telephone service more affordable. We encourage consumers to learn more about these programs and whether they qualify.”

The Lifeline and Link-Up programs are available in every state and territory; however, many states set their own eligibility guideline, especially where they provide additional funding. Typically, states require that recipients earn up to a certain income or be enrolled in other federal or state government assistance.

The Lifeline program typically provides eligible customers with a monthly discount of about \$10 off the price of basic home telephone service, while Link-Up provides a 50 percent discount off the installation charge of new service up to \$30. In many areas, consumers have a choice between the two discounts on traditional home telephone service or comparable benefits for wireless service.

For additional information, residential consumers can contact their local telephone company, visit www.lifelinesupport.org or contact their state's utility consumer advocate's office. Those offices are listed in NASUCA's Member Directory at <http://nasuca.org/about>.

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About the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA)

NASUCA is a non-profit, national organization of more than 40 state offices designated to represent consumers in state and federal utility proceedings. NASUCA regularly participates in proceedings before the Federal Communications Commission and other federal regulatory agencies.