

FCC OBSERVES “National Lifeline and Link Up Telephone Discount Awareness Week”

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has joined the National Association of Regulatory Commissioners (NARUC) and the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA) to call attention to the second annual “National Lifeline and Link Up Telephone Discount Awareness Week,” which takes place this year September 13 – 19. The observation began with a Congressional Briefing on Monday, September 13, that outlined for Members of Congress and their staffs the efforts being made to promote awareness of these two telephone assistance programs.

“Lifeline” involves discounts on monthly charges for a primary residential telephone line, which might be wireless service. “Link Up” involves a discount on the cost of initiating the primary telephone service for a residence, including the activation of a wireless phone that serves as the primary residential telephone. The discounts are available throughout the country, including an enhanced discount on Tribal lands. In general, consumers at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines, or who participate in one or more of a number of other assistance programs, are eligible for Lifeline and Link Up.

Various state and local agencies throughout the country are participating with outreach activities and events. The “Lifeline” and “Link Up” programs help ensure that all Americans can get basic telephone service by providing discounts to consumers who might not otherwise be able to afford service. Recent statistics demonstrate that of the 25.7 million eligible, 8.2 million households participate, or roughly a 32 percent national participation rate for 2009.

To help call attention to the availability of these programs, the FCC, NARUC and NASUCA urge government agencies and non-profit organizations to help disseminate information on Lifeline and Link Up to their constituents. More information about the programs and how to apply is available at www.lifeline.gov or <http://www.usac.org/li/low-income/apply-for-support.aspx>.