

HB 6200 Fact Sheet

Illinois currently has the highest kickbacks from prison phone calls of any state in the United States at \$13 million a year!

House Bill 6200: The Family Connections Bill, would eliminate this tax on some of our most vulnerable families.

HB 6200: Family Connections Bill

The IDOC will not suffer from the loss of these commissions, which represent less than one percent of its annual \$1.5 billion budget. Even people incarcerated have the right to communicate with loved ones!

Prison Phone Calls in Illinois: The Facts

- Ten states have eliminated commissions: Ohio, Missouri, Michigan, Nebraska, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, South Carolina, New Mexico, and California.
- States that have banned commissions and offer rates at 5 cents/minute or lower: Ohio, New York, New Jersey, and Virginia.
- In 2013, \$13.4 million was collected from phone commissions in Illinois, the highest in the country.
- It costs about \$4.00 to make a phone call in an Illinois prison.
- 76% of revenue (about \$3) goes to the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) as a commission.
- Commissions, or “kickbacks,” are a percentage of money collected from phone calls by a private company that go back to the state for the right to an exclusive contract.
- Securus Technologies, which has the contract for the IDOC, is one of two of the largest prison phone companies in the nation. In the last decade, Securus has paid out more than \$1.3 billion in kickbacks to corrections departments and local sheriffs.
- Securus initially won the contract with the IDOC in 2012 by offering a commission rate of 87%, but this figure was found to be in violation of state law and reduced to 76%.
- Responding to public pressure, the FCC on October 22, 2015 passed sweeping reform of the prison phone industry.

Where Does the Money Go?

The IDOC claims that the money collected from commissions goes to “inmate benefits.” As of July 1, 2015 all 100% of the phone commissions go to the IDOC. The IDOC claims this money is paying for HIV and Hepatitis C medication and treatment, as well as law books.

These commissions are not going toward “benefits,” but to general operating expenses. They are not providing higher education or computer literacy, the kind of benefits people need to break the cycle of recidivism. This is shifting the burden of incarceration from the state onto family members, people who have done no crimes.

We believe people in prison have a right to communicate with their loved ones on the outside. In the United States, there are 2.7 million children with a parent incarcerated, that’s one child in every classroom of 28 children in Illinois. The high cost of phone calls is a major obstacle for those trying to stay in touch. Communication with their families is critical to helping people lay the groundwork for transitioning to the community upon their release, thereby contributing to lower rates of recidivism.

Pass House Bill 6200: The Family Connections Bill to stop the exploitation of families in Illinois!

Illinois Campaign for Prison Phone Justice

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Organization Co-sponsors

ACLU of Illinois, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, Uptown People’s Law Center, People Demanding Action, Woodlawn Reentry Project, Coles County Mentoring Program, and Illinois Campaign for Prison Phone Justice.