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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **PSC Expands Revenue Base for Telecommunication Services for Deaf and Hearing-Impaired** *Wireless users will contribute to program funding*

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Feb. 16, 2009) – The Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) today extended to wireless (cellular) telephones the surcharge that funds telecommunication services for deaf and hearing-impaired Kentuckians.

The greatly expanded revenue base will bring a decrease in the per-line surcharge that is currently assessed only on landline telephones. The changes take effect June 1.

“Today’s action reflects the changing realities of the telecommunications market,” PSC Chairman David Armstrong said. “It also insures adequate revenue and brings a necessary element of equity to the funding of these essential services.”

The Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH) estimates that there are nearly 650,000 Kentuckians who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech impediments. That number is expected to grow as the numbers of elderly residents increase, expanding the need for special telecommunication services, the KCDHH says.

In an order issued today, the PSC took the following actions:

- Extended the surcharges for the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) and the Telecommunication Relay Service (TRS) to wireless telephones
- Lowered the monthly TRS surcharge from seven cents per line to two cents per line. The monthly TAP surcharge, which is set by statute, will remain at two cents. The total monthly surcharge falls from nine cents to four cents per line.
- Ordered all wireless and landline carrier to inform their customers of the changes for two billing cycles prior to June 1.

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The TAP fund, formerly known as the Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf Distribution Program (TDD) fund, is used to provide specialized devices that enable the deaf and hard of hearing to communicate via the telephone. These devices, which are provided at no cost to the user, include amplified telephones, captioned phones and other equipment.

The TRS program enables those persons with specialized devices to communicate with those who do not have such equipment. Together, TAP and TRS allow full access to the telephone system for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Today's order comes in response to a petition filed by the KCDHH. The KCDHH noted that Kentucky has more than 2.4 million wireless phone numbers in service, while the number of residential landline phones has fallen by more than half since 2006, reducing revenue for the TRS and TAP programs.

At the time that the TRS (1991) and TAP (1995) programs were instituted, there were relatively few wireless phones and most residents relied solely on landline phones.

"The expansion of the customer base is reasonable and equitable, as (landline) customers have borne the responsibility of contributing fees to both programs since their respective inceptions," the PSC said in today's order. "By expanding the base of telephone customers supporting the programs, there will be an equitable sharing of costs among the retail customer base."

The order and related documents are available on the PSC Web site, [psc.ky.gov](http://psc.ky.gov). The case number is 2007-00464.

The PSC is an independent agency attached for administrative purposes to the Energy and Environment Cabinet. It regulates more than 1,500 gas, water, sewer, electric and telecommunication utilities operating in Kentucky and has approximately 100 employees.