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### PHONE CHARGES TO BE REDUCED FOR FAMILIES OF INMATES

The Governor today announced that the State Department of Correctional Services will reduce excessive telephone charges paid by the families of inmates at state correction facilities. This action precedes a previously scheduled argument slated for Tuesday, January 9, before the New York State Court of Appeals, during which the plaintiffs are challenging the legality of the previous administration's policy relating to the telephone costs.

Long seen as an unfair tax on inmate families, the newly proposed rates will charge only the cost of the call, allowing families to maintain contact with their loved ones, without the undue financial burden of a State commission on the rate.

The Administration's action was made after consultation with Assemblyman Jeffrion Aubry, who has long advocated for this change in policy and who shepherded legislation which passed the Assembly to end the excessive charge. The administration also consulted Senator Michael Nozzolio, who introduced similar legislation in the Senate.

Assemblyman Aubry, Chairman of the Assembly Committee on Correction, said, "I am pleased that the Governor has committed to providing justice to the families of inmates, who have had to pay exorbitant telephone rates to talk to their loved ones. Thanks to the Governor for this humane decision and to the many advocates who made this solution possible."

Senator Nozzolio, Chairman of the Senate Crime and Corrections Committee, said, "Governor Spitzer deserves tremendous credit for quickly addressing this issue and developing a comprehensive solution which restores fairness. For many years I have fought to restore fairness to the policy of charging inmate's families exorbitant rates for simply staying in contact with family members who are incarcerated. It is my belief that the benefits of keeping a family together far outweigh the revenue gained from the current practice."

The action will be implemented by Brian Fischer, Acting Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services, at the start of the April 1, 2007 fiscal year. The elimination of this commission will reduce the cost of these calls by at least 50 percent.

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