

November 15, 2008

Public Service Commission
Governor Office Building
200 Madison Street
PO Box 360
Jefferson City, Mo. 65102-0360

Re: Case No. TO-2009-0042

Commissioners:

As recommended by staff in August, 2008, a review of the \$.13 surcharge was discussed at the October meeting of The Advisory Committee for Missouri Relay.

Attached please find some of the responses of the committee members, citing their own personal reasons for maintaining the \$.13 surcharge. Although not the unanimous opinion of the committee members, these responses do reflect the general discussion on the topic.

I also agree with the comments citing that additional efforts are needed to examine our present TAP program, reviewing restrictions and expanding the availability of Captel, as many citizens who would benefit from this technology do not qualify based on current audiometric data. As many of you may remember the somewhat tenuous time when Captel was introduced in Missouri, we are again at a time where technology has surpassed what is offered in our state, prompting a need to also review and upgrade what is offered by our TAP program to bring the citizens of Missouri on par with surrounding states.

Although there is presently an adequate fund balance, input into the fund as is currently provided by land lines is dropping and all indicators suggest that this trend will continue. The suggestion of including wireless communication lines as contributors to the fund is well received by many, but will take time and legislative change. This suggests that while demand for funding should increase for the above stated reasons, the input to the fund will continue to drop. Maintaining the surcharge of \$.13 may only temporarily compensate for the overall decline in land line input.

Hearing loss remains the number one birth defect in the United States, affecting millions of our citizens. Early identification, intervention, surgical and technological advances have had great success and continue to play a role in the mainstreaming of these individuals in our workforce and political arenas. Maintaining our present surcharge of

§.13 is critical for continuing to allow this large population the ability to communicate as other citizens of Missouri.

Sincerely,

E. Tracy Mishler, AuD, CCC-A
Chair
Missouri Relay Advisory Committee