

**(Neb.)-Public Service Commissioner Lowers Relay Surcharge**

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 04/19/2013 09:12 AM

(LINCOLN)—The Nebraska Public Service Commission has lowered the monthly surcharge used to fund the telecommunications relay system in Nebraska to three cents, beginning July 1st. The new three-cent monthly surcharge will translate into \$240,000 less collected from Nebraskans in the next fiscal year.

District 3 commissioner Tim Schram of Gretna, the commission's representative on the Relay Advisory Committee, stated, "New technology is removing barriers, opening pathways for the hearing and speech impaired community to communicate more easily and efficiently, and lowering the costs of providing services."

In addition to paying the telecommunications charges associated with relay services for the hearing and speech impaired, surcharge funds are also used for an equipment distribution program that helps provide specialized equipment to qualified applicants.

The three-cent surcharge, which also was recommended by the chair of the commission's Relay Advisory Committee, also provides for a sufficient reserve necessary to fund program expenses.

Emerging technologies continue to change the way hearing and speech impaired individuals communicate. New technology choices available from both wireline and wireless networks include Video, Internet Relay and broadband-based captioning services. Some of these new services are subject to federal oversight and paid for from the federal relay fund instead of the traditional relay services funded by this surcharge.

--Nebraska Public Service Commission