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## **Consumers need to know about Lifeline telephone assistance programs**

**WASHINGTON – Sept. 14, 2009** – With millions of consumers struggling in today's economy, their advocates on utility issues want to increase public awareness of Lifeline and Link-Up programs. Both federal programs offer payment assistance for basic local telephone service, making it more affordable for eligible consumers to stay connected or get reconnected.

“Knowing about resources to maintain basic local telephone service is vital in an economy where many consumers are struggling to make ends meet,” said David Springe, consumer counsel for the State of Kansas and president of the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA). “The federal Lifeline and Link-Up programs provide discounts to eligible consumers to make telephone service more affordable. We encourage consumers to learn more about these programs and how to apply.”

The Lifeline and Link-Up programs are available in every state and territory; however, many states set their own eligibility guidelines because they provide separate funding.

The Lifeline program provides eligible customers with a monthly discount of about \$10 off the price of basic home telephone service, while Link-Up provides a 50 percent discount off the installation charge of new service. In some areas, consumers have a choice between the above discounts on home telephone service or comparable benefits for wireless service.

To find out additional information, residential consumers can contact their local telephone company, visit [www.lifelinesupport.org](http://www.lifelinesupport.org) or contact their state's utility consumer advocate's office. Those offices are listed in NASUCA's Member Directory at <http://nasuca.org/about>.

NASUCA is part of a joint effort across the country to encourage consumers to learn more about discounted telephone service through designating the week of Sept. 14, 2009, as National Telephone Discount Lifeline Awareness Week. The effort includes federal, state and local agencies and organizations, including non-profits and community-based groups.

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### ***About the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA)***

NASUCA is a non-profit, national organization of more than 40 state offices designated to represent consumers in state and federal utility proceedings. NASUCA regularly participates in proceedings before the Federal Communications Commission and other federal regulatory agencies.