January 4, 2013

FCC Comment 12-375

Commissioners and Staff:

I am an attorney in Alaska who occasionally has client in custody. Recently a client was unable to reach the social worker at the agency which had custody of his child because Securus had blocked the Office of Children’s Service’s line over an unpaid bill to Securus. This deprived the client an opportunity to communicate with the social worker to arrange visits with his daughter to his disadvantage in a Child In Need of Aid proceeding.

Providers should be prohibited from having exclusive contracts with state correctional facilities or blocking calls to counsel or government agencies. We need to subordinate profit to an individual’s right to communicate with counsel, government agencies that impact their lives and family.

The high costs charged to families to speak to their incarcerated relatives is also an area ripe with abuse. The great majority of people incarcerated are indigent and usually the breadwinner for families. To allow private companies to charge for the right to communicate at several dollars a minute is a step back to the early days of prisons in England. In those times jails or prison hulks were not government owned but were owned by private individuals who took inmates in order to be able to extorted what they could from families and inmates for food, clothing and other necessities and thus turned jails into profit making entities.

Sincerely,

James H. Cannon
Attorney at Law