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Maine Public Advocate Office

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RATEWATCHER TELECOM GUIDE

VOLUME 17

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RATEWATCHER TELECOM GUIDE

Maine PUC Approves Verizon-MCI Merger with Fewer Conditions Than We Had Sought

The Maine PUC recently approved the Verizon-MCI merger with some conditions. The FCC and the U.S. Department of Justice also approved the merger with limited conditions prior to the Maine PUC's decision. One of the conditions imposed by the FCC is a requirement that Verizon provide stand-alone DSL for 2 years. "Stand Alone" DSL means customers may obtain DSL broadband service from incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) like Verizon without also having to purchase traditional voice telephone service from the same company. (For more about Verizon's stand-alone DSL offering in Maine, see page 2).

MAINE
PUBLIC
ADVOCATE

In the Maine proceeding, the Public Advocate had pushed for stand-alone DSL as a condition to the merger. We argued that the practice of tying DSL to the company's voice service harms competition by discouraging consumers from using alternative voice carriers, including Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) which requires a high speed Internet (broadband) connection.

The Maine PUC found that Maine consumers will face fewer choices as a result of the merger and it rejected Verizon's argument that this reduction in customer choice was sufficiently ameliorated by the presence of "intermodal competition"—that is competition from cable, wireless, satellite and VOIP. The Public Advocate and competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs) had put forth evidence as to the limited extent of competition from these other sources in Maine. The Maine PUC concluded that cable telephony has only a small market share in Maine, wireless is not an adequate substitute for wireline service at this time,

THE BOTTOM LINE

and VOIP is not a viable alternative for consumers who don't have access to high speed broadband. Today, cable broadband is far from ubiquitously available in Maine, and DSL is not universally available in many areas of the state.

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Local Service – Few good alternatives exist for typical residential customers. High volume long-distance users or those who want to bundle local service with high-speed Internet service should consider an alternative local provider. Business customers should consider alternatives to local service from an incumbent phone company.

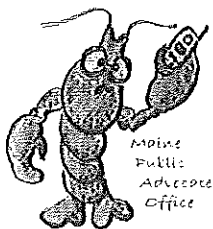
Long-Distance Only – This newsletter presents five long-distance options. However, Pioneer and Touchtone still remain two of the best deals for intrastate and interstate long-distance service. Both charge low rates, offer 6-second billing, and don't charge deceptive regulatory fees. Choose Touchtone if you don't live in Verizon territory or if you use fewer than 100 minutes per month. Otherwise, Pioneer is cheaper, assuming you always pay on time.

Prepaid Calling – CallBravo is a new option for prepaid calling and is offered for 1.9¢/minute with no other fees provided you want to purchase your minutes online (www.callbravo.com). Sam's Club's AT&T card has a new lower price at stores, but now imposes a substantial 15% surcharge when you recharge minutes by phone. OneSuite remains a good option if you want to buy minutes online. Each service provides certain advantages as indicated in our report.

VOIP – A good choice for a second line if you have a broadband (high-speed) Internet connection. Now that the FCC has ordered VOIP services to comply with emergency 911 systems, VOIP is one step closer to real telephone service. Consider the advantages and disadvantages of VOIP.

Wireless – Net 10 (net10.com) is a newly featured prepaid wireless plan that offers airtime for 10¢ a minute and card refill advantages. Prepaid wireless is best for low-volume or occasional use of a cell phone. If you use well over 100 minutes every month, a monthly fee plan is better. As always, one size does not fit all – the best choice depends on how and where you plan to use your service.

Internet – High-speed (DSL, Cable, or Wireless) is best if it's available. Dial-up services range from \$5.50 to \$23 per month. Maine-based ISPs are likely to provide better customer service, but a low-cost national ISP can be a bargain, if there's a toll-free local access number in your calling area.



(Verizon MCI merger continued from page 1)

As a result, the Maine PUC found that following the merger intermodal competition is not likely to reduce the harm to consumers that will occur in the near term. The Maine PUC, therefore, imposed three conditions on its approval of the merger to protect ratepayers: 1) a reporting requirement to track Verizon's compliance with the FCC's stand-alone DSL requirement in Maine; 2) a condition to freeze intrastate special access rates in Maine, which tracks another one of the FCC's conditions, and 3) a condition requiring Verizon to track merger savings in Maine.

The Public Advocate had pressed for a number of tougher conditions -- among them, price controls on the stand-alone DSL, ensuring some of the cost savings from the merger would benefit ratepayers through reduced rates, and a requirement for broader deployment of DSL in Maine. The Maine PUC chose not to adopt these proposals, however.

Legislature to Consider Major Initiatives for Expanding Access to High-Speed Internet and Wireless Telephone Services

Since last spring the Public Advocate has worked with other members of the Baldacci Administration on recommendations for enabling Mainers in un-served portions of the State to receive affordable broadband service and use wireless telephone calls without disruption. This effort, known as ConnectME, resulted from Governor Baldacci's announcement in the State of the State address in January 2005 that for too long Maine has suffered from inadequate service both from broadband and cell phone providers. In particular, the Governor pledged to achieve universal and affordable access throughout Maine's populated areas for broadband and wireless service by 2010 and 2008 respectively.

Following that announcement the Governor appointed three task forces whose memberships reflected the varied interests of rural Maine, telecommunications, business and government leaders. Public Advocate Ward chaired the Service Availability Sub-Group of the Wireless Telecommunications Task Force and also served on the Broadband Access Infrastructure Board. A summary of the ConnectME efforts can be found at the Maine PUC's website at www.maine.gov/mpuc/broadband/index.html.

By January 2006 the efforts in these areas had progressed to a point where there was broad consensus among stakeholders that Maine needed to devote financial resources to ensure that new broadband investments (in DSL, cable TV, wireless infrastructure) are made in this state and that new cell towers are deployed in order to boost wireless coverage - particularly on the State's major highways and in service center communities. The ConnectME Task Force estimates that 86% of Maine's population has access to broadband infrastructure, leaving 14% unserved by high-speed Internet technologies. In the case of wireless telephone service, the ConnectME group estimated that an investment of \$55 million (from both public and private sources) will be necessary to provide cell phone service in all service center communities and along all major arterial highways, at a minimal level of -95 decibel signal strength.

On January 17th the Governor's Legal Counsel, Tom Federle, addressed the Utilities Committee of the Maine Legislature and described the general outlines of the Governor's legislation that will be submitted in the 122nd Legislature to address these deficiencies and fulfill the Governor's pledge to achieve universal wireless and broadband coverage. This certainly will be a major undertaking and will be covered in future Ratelwatcher Telecom Guide issues.

Verizon Now Offers Stand-Alone DSL

Verizon and other incumbent local exchange carriers have generally offered DSL service only to customers who also subscribe to the company's traditional voice service. However, Verizon has recently begun offering "stand-alone" DSL to customers in Maine. This is good news for consumers because it means consumers no longer will be required to buy local voice service as a condition of purchasing DSL. That will free customers up to try different voice providers, including VOIP. It also means consumers who have "cut the cord" -- those that exclusively use wireless phones -- can get DSL without having to pay for wireline voice service that they do not want.

Prices vary depending, among other things, on the connection speed and whether the customer makes a 1 year commitment or opts to subscribe for the service on a month to month basis. The fastest speed is up to 3 Mbps/768 Kbps
(continued to page 7)

LOCAL SERVICE COMPETITION

After recent changes in FCC rules and the recent mergers between SBC & ATT and Verizon & MCI, there is little competition now for residential local telephone service. The following chart shows alternatives for Verizon's business customers and for residential customers who use a high volume of toll minutes. Business rates heavily depend upon the services chosen and length of contracts. Compare these rates to Verizon local service rates, as follows:

Verizon's standard rates: Res.— \$17.79 economy, \$19.29 premium; Bus.— \$35.38 economy, \$38.49 premium.

Name/Phone/Website	Business or Residential	Monthly Rates (Res./Bus.) (excluding surcharges & taxes)	Notes
AT&T One Rate (800) 205-6268 att.net	R	Unlimited local and long-distance \$58 (Res. Plan)	4 features
BCN Telecom (888) 444-5454 callntt.com	B & R	B \$26 to \$30 per line* R 5% below Verizon rate	*Depending on customer location
ChoiceOne (800) 525-2515 choiceonecom.com	B	Starting at \$23.30 per line \$27.70 w/8 features	Various exchanges
Conversent (800) 275-2088 conversent.com	B	\$24.35 3 yr. commitment to \$34 month-to-month	Various exchanges
CTC (800) 825-5282 ctcnet.com	B	\$27 to \$38 per line	Various exchanges
Excel (877) 668-0808 excel.com	R	\$32.45 to \$36* with 3 features (Requires Excel long distance)	*depending on location and long-distance plan. Includes 100 LD minutes
GWI (866) 494-2020 gwi.net	B* & R	Res. \$40 including unlimited long-distance (if bundled w/DSL) \$50 without/DSL	5 features at \$5 extra *Bus. rates are higher Various exchanges
MCI (877) 777-6271 theneighborhood.com	B & R	Unlimited local and long-distance Res. - \$50* Bus. - \$60	5 calling features included 1st month free *Over \$66 with surcharges and taxes
Mid-Maine (877) 643-6246 midmaine.com	B & R	B \$26 3 yr. commitment to \$32 month-to-month R - \$50 - local/DSL bundle	Service available in selected exchanges
Oxford (800) 520-9911 oxfordnetworks.com	B & R	R - \$11.65 - \$16.69 B - \$22.71 to \$31.84 R - \$40 (with 5 features) B - \$31-28 - \$40.34 depending on number of lines (\$7.72 per line)	Norway/South Paris Parts of Lewiston/Auburn Bus. service avail. in many areas in southern and central Maine plus Bangor
PineTree (866) 746-3873 pinetreenetworks.com	B	\$25 - \$35 per line	Greater Portland & Lewiston areas
Time Warner (800) 833-2253 twedigitalphone.com (Voice over Internet)	R	\$40 with digital cable or Roadrunner \$45 with analog cable TV \$50 without the above	VOIP based Southern Maine & Aroostook County only Includes unlimited long-distance, many features
USA Telephone (877) 872-2800 savewithusa.com	B & R	R - \$20-\$25 with 3 features (depending on location) B - \$29-\$32 per line with 3 features (depending on location)	Local services bundled with 2.9¢ instate and interstate LD minutes (B and R)
CLOSED TO NEW CUSTOMERS			

UNLIMITED LOCAL AND LONG-DISTANCE TELEPHONE PLANS

NAMES	FEATURES	UNLIMITED TOLL WITH LOCAL	UNLIMITED STATEWIDE TOLL (AND LOCAL)	UNLIMITED TOLL ONLY	DSL & UNLIMITED TELEPHONE (LOCAL & TOLL)	NOTES
AT&T One Rate USA 1-800-222-0300 att.com	Unlimited to U.S. 4 features	\$58	N/A	\$30	\$88	may choose 4 out of 11 features / Voicemail - add \$5
GWI GWiLINE* 1-866-494-2020 gwi.net	Unlimited to US & Canada 5 features**	\$50	N/A	N/A	\$70 (no added line charge)	*Available in selected exchanges **\$5 additional for optional features
IDT Unlimited 1-800-254-1718 idt.net	Unlimited to U.S. 6 features	\$40	N/A	\$28	N/A	Voicemail available at extra charge of \$2.95/mon.
MCI Neighborhood 1-877-777-6271 mci.com	Unlimited to U.S. 5 features	\$50*	N/A	N/A	\$80	Includes voicemail *With new increased surcharges, total bill is now \$70.51
Oxford Networks 1-800-520-9911 oxfordnetworks.com	Unlimited to U.S. & Canada 5 features = \$5.95	\$42.90	N/A	\$17.95	\$73.56	Lewiston/Auburn area only
Pine Tree Networks 1-866-746-3873 pinetreetworks.com	Unlimited to US 3 features	\$45	N/A	N/A	\$75	W. Buxton, Bar Mills, Waterboro, Gray, W. Gray & New Gloucester
Time Warner 1-800-833-2253 twmaine.com	Unlimited to US & Canada Advanced features	\$40	N/A	N/A	\$80 (no added line charge)	Enhanced VOIP Service Up to \$50 w/o Roadrunner or Digital/Cable Southern Maine & Aroostook County area only
Verizon Freedom 1-800-870-9999 verizon.com	Unlimited to U.S. & Canada & Puerto Rico - 5 features	\$55	\$40	N/A	\$70	Includes voicemail & 4 other features

Note: Homefield provides unlimited local and statewide toll calls for a low price but that service is temporarily unavailable to new customers.

N/A = not available Toll = long-distance

All prices exclude surcharges and taxes. Note that Time Warner and GWI do not add the \$6.50 subscriber line charge.

LONG-DISTANCE DEPARTMENT

Universal Service Fund Update

The USF fee is 10.2% through March 31, 2006. The surcharge is applied only to interstate services on telephone and wireless bills. The USF pays for affordable rural phone service, school and library Internet and telecommunications service, low-income telephone service discounts, and rural telemedicine service discounts.



PREPAID CALLING — UPDATE

	Sam's Club/AT&T	OneSuite.com	CallBravo.Com
US Rate 48 (states)	2.84¢	2.5¢*	1.9¢
Western Europe	11.36¢	2.9¢ - 9¢	2.5¢ - 3¢
Canada	8.52¢	3.2¢	2.8¢
Other Fees	5% sales tax on initial store purchase and phone refills	None	None
How to buy?	Sam's Club (similar offers at BJ's & Costco) or renew by phone	www.onesuite.com	www.callbravo.com
Expiration	24 months from activation or last recharge	6 months from activation or last recharge	4 months from activation or last recharge
Record of call	No	Yes via Internet	Yes - via Internet
Use from Canada? Rate?	Yes 14.2¢	Yes 3.5¢* (*2.5¢ from Montreal, Toronto, & Vancouver)	Yes 3.9¢
Payphone Charge	43¢	55¢	75¢
Special Features	Enhanced features offered at extra charge. Can use in many countries.	Many free enhanced features.	Many free enhanced features
Customer Service #	800-530-6744	866-417-8483	866-813-0222

Calls to international mobile phones may be priced much higher.

NOTICE —
Sam's Club/AT&T now applies a 15% surcharge when you add minutes by phone.

PUBLIC ADVOCATE RECOMMENDS THAT PUC REDUCE VERIZON LOCAL RATES BY \$8 PER MONTH

In the revenue investigation now before the Maine Public Utilities Commission, the Public Advocate has recommended that the Commission reduce the annual revenues of Verizon-Maine by \$46.2 million annually. If adopted by the PUC, the rate reduction recommended by the Public Advocate would result in a savings of \$8 per month, or \$100 per year for each Verizon residential customer who subscribes to Verizon's premium local service. Another party to the same rate proceeding -- the American Association for Retired Persons (AARP) -- is recommending additional reductions in Verizon's rates.

The Public Utilities Commission is reviewing Verizon's rates as the result of an order issued last January by the Maine Supreme Court. The rate investigation is taking place after an extended period during which Verizon-Maine has operated under an alternative form of regulation (AFOR). Last winter, the Maine Supreme Court ordered the MPUC to demonstrate that Verizon's AFOR rates were no higher under the current AFOR than they would have been under "rate base-rate of return regulation."

The Public Advocate's finding that Verizon-Maine has a \$46.2 million revenue surplus reflects the extent to which the Company has been able to achieve cost savings due to efficiency gains. Our recommendation is based on an extensive review of Verizon-Maine's revenues, expenses and investment devoted to providing service within Maine. It also reflects the removal of expenses that should not be recovered from ratepayers. The testimony of five expert witnesses shows that Verizon's customers deserve to see an immediate reduction in Verizon's rate for local service. Furthermore, the revenue surplus identified by our witnesses does not include certain adjustments that reflect Yellow Pages revenues and the effects of other transactions between Verizon-Maine and its affiliates proposed by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). Those adjustments, if accepted by the MPUC, would result in an even larger revenue reduction.

SAMPLE OF RESIDENTIAL VOIP RETAIL SERVICES*

	FEATURES	PRICE	NOTES
AT&T CALLVANTAGE att.com/callvantage	Unlimited to US & Canada,	\$30/month (\$30 activation fee) Europe - 5¢ to 9¢	Early termination fee may apply if cancelled within 1 year Adapter included
BROADVOICE broadvoice.com	Unlimited in Maine	\$10/month +3.9¢/min. interstate & Canada & low international rates	Adaptor included \$40 activation fee \$10 with own device
	Unlimited World (US + 21 countries)	\$20/mon.	
LINGO lingo.com	Unlimited to US, Canada & Western Europe	\$20/month	\$30 activation fee First month free
	500 Minutes US, Canada & Western Europe	\$15/month	\$40 termination fee within 1 year
NET2PHONE net2phone.com	Unlimited US & Canada	\$30/month Europe 5¢ to 8¢	\$40 fee if cancel w/in 1 year Requires prepayment
	Unlimited Europe or bundled rates for specific counties	+ \$40/month	\$30 activation fee Adapter included
	500 minutes US & Canada	\$15/month	
	350 Western Europe	\$15/month	
PACKET8 packet8.net	Freedom Unlimited US, & Canada	\$20/month Europe 3¢ to 8¢	Claims to be E-911 compliant \$30 Activation Fee Adapter included Claims ok with dialup
	Freedom Unlimited Global Unlimited Calls to 40 European & Asia countries/cities included	\$30 extra per continent/ month	
PULVER Free World Dialup pulver.com	Unlimited to other members (May ring regular phone numbers with separate service)	FREE	Can work with a special telephone or free software
SIPPHONE sipphone.com	Unlimited to other Sipphones May ring regular phone #s	Free to other Sipphones Reg. calls start at 2¢	Using telephone adapter (\$60) or computer software (free)
SKYPE skype.com	Unlimited PC to PC May ring regular phone #s	Free to other Skype users Reg. calls start at 2.3¢	Using computer mike/speakers
TIME WARNER Digital Phone twmaine.com	Unlimited US, Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico & Virgin Islands	\$40/month (\$50 without Roadrunner) Europe 7¢ to 8¢	No adaptor needed E-911 compliant
VOICEPULSE voicepulse.com	Unlimited US	\$25/month	Adapter included
	Unlimited ME + 200 Long Distance	\$15/month Europe 5¢ to 9¢	Required 1-year term
VONAGE vonage.com	Unlimited US, Canada & Puerto Rico	\$25/month	
	500 Minutes	\$15/mo. (3.9¢/min. after 500 included) Europe - 3¢ to 8¢	\$30 Activation Fee Adapter included

*Note—Business plans also available from many VOIP providers.

(Verizon - Stand-Alone DSL—continued from page 2)

and the slower speed is up to 768 Kbps/128 Kbps (which is still many times faster than dialup). Generally speaking, the prices for stand-alone DSL for residential customers (business prices vary) are:

<u>Speed</u>	<u>Commitment</u>	<u>Price</u>
Up to 3 Mbps/768 Kbps	1 year commitment	\$34.95/month
Up to 3 Mbps/768 Kbps	month to month	\$42.95/month
Up to 768 Kbps/128 Kbps	1 year commitment	\$19.95/month
Up to 768 Kbps/128 Kbps	month to month	\$42.95/month

Customers should also be aware that there is a \$19.95 set-up fee and an early termination fee of \$79.00 for customers who make a 1-year commitment but do not fulfill that commitment. Prices may also vary as a result of promotions that may be available so customers should ask about these options. Verizon has also dropped its DSL price for customers who have Verizon voice service. Generally speaking, customers receive a \$5.00 discount on their DSL if they are also Verizon voice customers. The DSL prices, which would be added to the customer's monthly price for voice service, are as follows:

<u>Speed</u>	<u>Commitment</u>	<u>Price</u>
Up to 3 Mbps/768 Kbps	1 year commitment	\$29.95/month
Up to 3 Mbps/768 Kbps	month to month	\$37.95/month
Up to 768 Kbps/128 Kbps	1 year commitment	\$14.95/month
Up to 768 Kbps/128 Kbps	month to month	\$37.95/month

You can check whether Verizon DSL is available in your area by going to www.verizon.com and entering your telephone number or your address (if you are not a Verizon voice customer); however, the Public Advocate recommends calling Verizon at 1-800-870-9999 and talking to a Verizon representative about whether DSL is available at your specific location.

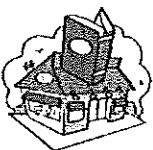
Out on the Limb in a Phone Tree?

Are you a consumer that is annoyed by an "automated phone answering/referral system" that many companies are using for all inbound calls. These automated systems are difficult to understand and there is often no way to bypass the main menu. However, there is a website that provides the name of the company, company phone number and the steps necessary to talk to a live person. <http://www.paulenglish.com/ivr/>

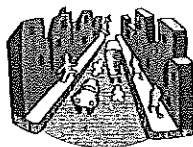


FREE WiFi LOCATIONS

Access to free wireless connections is growing in the United States. Many WiFi hot spots are free and continue to pop up in cafes, libraries, parks, airports, and lots of cities now offer wireless Internet access. One important fact to be concerned about using these free WiFi hot spots is the lack of security and reliability. To find a free WiFi location in your state, check out this website: <http://www.wififreespot.com/>



Cafes



Cities



Airports



Parks



Libraries

TRADITIONAL PAY AS YOU GO LONG-DISTANCE PLANS

Looking for a good long-distance service to combine with basic service from your local phone company? The Public Advocate Office has provided five options to choose from. Touchtone is available to customers who are served by an independent rural local phone company. You may want to choose between Pioneer or Touchtone if you live in Verizon territory, however Pioneer has an edge if you use more than \$15 of long-distance per month or are willing to accept email billing.

FIVE LOW-PRICED FULL-SERVICE LONG-DISTANCE PLANS				
COMPANY	BCN/Norcom callntt.com		Pioneer pioneertelephone.com	
FEATURED PLAN			Talk Cents	
(RESIDENTIAL)	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate
RESIDENTIAL per minute rate (excluding surcharges & taxes)	4.9¢	3.9¢	3.5¢	3.25¢
Monthly Minimum	none		none	
Monthly Fee	\$7.95*		99¢*	
RESIDENTIAL SAMPLE MONTHLY COSTS :	INCLUDES 50% INSTATE/50% INTERSTATE MINUTES & MONTHLY FEES, EXCLUDING SURCHARGES & TAXES.			
LOW @ 10 mins. per month	\$8.39		\$1.34	
MEDIUM @ 100 mins. per month	\$12.35		\$4.37	
HIGH @ 500 mins. per month	\$22.00*		\$16.88*	
HIGHEST @ 1,000 mins. per month	\$44.00*		\$33.75*	
Hawaii/Alaska	19¢		6.9¢	
RESIDENTIAL INTERNATIONAL RATES*				
Canada	10¢		3.9¢	
France	8¢		4.5¢	
Hong Kong	10¢		4.9¢	
Italy	8¢		4.9¢	
Spain	10¢		4.9¢	
United Kingdom	6¢		4.9¢	
AVAILABLE IN RURAL INDEPENDENT AREAS?	no		no	
(BUSINESS)	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate
Business per minute rates (excluding surcharges and taxes)	4.9¢	3.9¢	3.5¢	3.25¢
Monthly Minimum	none		none	
Monthly Fee	\$7.95*		99¢*	
PICC Charges (per line)	\$2.95		\$4.21	
In-bound 800 Rates	3.9¢ B / 4.9¢ R	3.9¢ B / 4.9¢ R	3.5¢**	3.25¢**
TO SUBSCRIBE, CALL:	1-888-484-5454		1-888-492-6878	
NOTE: Surcharges are not included in the rates shown.	*\$7.95 fee waived if usage over \$20.		*99¢ fee waived w/online billing or usage over \$15	
\$5 fee to change carrier is often covered by new carrier upon request.	6-second billing.		**99¢/mo. per 800 number.	
PICC charges (a per-line access charge) apply to multi-line business customers only.			Alt. Plans - Rate Buster 2.9¢ instate/2.7¢ interstate with 1-minute billing.	
1-minute billing unless otherwise noted. An average customer will save about 10% as a result of 6-second billing.			6-second billing.	
*Beware that international calls to mobile phones may be priced much higher.			Pioneer is a Maine company.	
			1.9¢/min. to call other Pioneer customers.	
			Late payment causes rates to double.	



FIVE LOW-PRICED FULL-SERVICE LONG-DISTANCE PLANS					
Telrite telrite.com		Touchtone callntt.com		Verizon verizon.com	
		4.25¢ Plan		5¢ Plan	
Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate
6¢	4.2¢	4.25¢	4.25¢	7¢	5¢
none		none		none	
\$2.95*		none		\$4.95	
INCLUDES 50% INSTATE/50% INTERSTATE MINUTES & MONTHLY FEES, EXCLUDING SURCHARGES & TAXES.					
\$3.46		43¢		\$5.55	
\$8.05		\$4.25		\$10.95	
\$28.45		\$21.25		\$34.95	
\$53.95		\$42.50		\$64.95	
4.2¢		15¢/7.9¢		5¢	
RESIDENTIAL INTERNATIONAL RATES*					
5¢		5¢		5¢	
6¢		5¢		10¢	
6¢		7¢		10¢	
6¢		5¢		10¢	
6¢		5¢		10¢	
5¢		5¢		8¢	
no		yes		yes	
Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate
6¢	4.2¢	4.25¢	4.25¢	7¢*	7¢*
none		none		none	
\$2.95*		none		\$8.50	
\$2.50		\$1.50		none	
4.8¢**	3.5¢**	4.25¢**	4.25¢**	7¢**	7¢**
866-838-0682		sold only by agents*		800-585-4466	
*No monthly fee when using Auto ACH payment.		*Touchtone Agents in Maine: 1 888 484-5454 1 877 839-8484 1 800 619-2537 1 877 885-9844 1 866 764-8001 1 888 262-7864		*Lower Bus. Rates (e.g. 6¢ with \$24 minimum)	
**\$1.00/mo. per 800 number				**\$5/mo. Fee applies to 800 inbound service.	
6-second billing for business customers and 1-minute billing for residential customers.		6-second billing. Lower rate may be available for high-volume customers. Customer service 1-800-266-4006 **\$1.99/mo. per 800 number		6-Second billing applies to business plans. Only 1-minute billing for residential. International rates are much higher without advance sign-up and monthly fee.	

WIRELESS DEPARTMENT

Public Advocate Maps Cell Dead Zones on Web Site

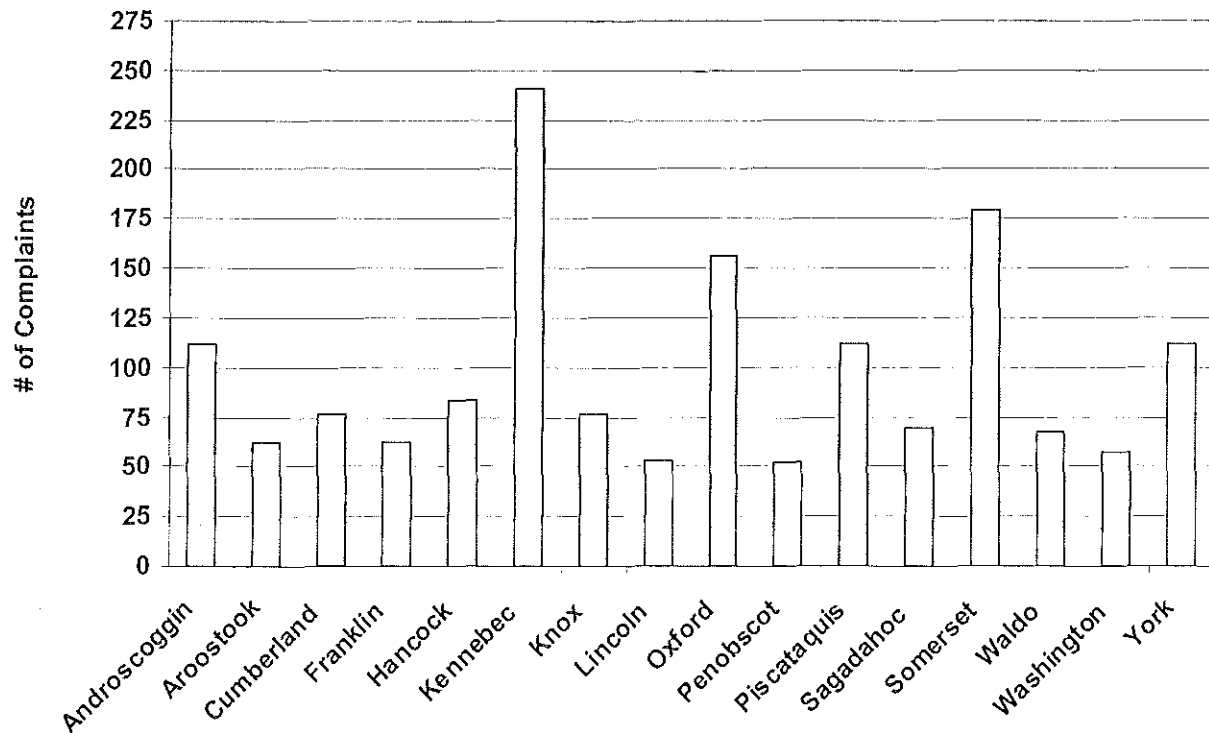
The Public Advocate has been providing a map of locations where wireless telephone service is not available on the office web site since January 2005. The locations are identified by provider (U.S. Cellular, Verizon Wireless, Unicel, Traction, Cingular, Sprint, Nextel, T-Mobile and several smaller-volume carriers), and by the type of equipment in use by the wireless customer reporting the dead zone.

By now, more than 2,292 locations are mapped at http://megis.state.me.us/website/wireless_dz/viewer.htm on the "I Can't Hear You Now" map.


This mapping exercise has already had an impact in two ways. In a recent agreement between U.S. Cellular, the Telephone Association of Maine and the OPA that the PUC approved this fall, U.S. Cellular has agreed to report on its efforts to eliminate the dead zones it is responsible for on the "I Can't Hear You Now" map on the OPA website. Additionally, the Connect ME Wireless Task Force (see page 2) has incorporated the "I Can't Hear You Now" locations in its own map of wireless service territories in Maine. In both settings, the OPA's dead zone map is forcing wireless companies to pay attention to customer dissatisfaction with lost signals and unserved areas.

The OPA continues to accept customer complaints about wireless dead zones. Please go to the OPA website at www.state.me.us/meopa/telephone/report_dead_spot.html if you want to report a location where your cell provider leaves you in the lurch. You will be helping to improve wireless phone service in Maine.

Maine Cellular Dead Zone Complaints by County 2005



SAMPLE OF MONTHLY FEE WIRELESS PLANS (see page 12 for Prepaid Services)

	Cingular cingular.com (888-333-7055)		US Cellular uscellular.com (888-944-9400)				Unicel unicel.com (800-336-4455) - local (800-462-3558) - national			Verizon verizon.com (800-256-4646)		
	Nation	Family	Local		National		Unlimited Round the Clock GSM (Local)	True Nationwide GSM	Family Time GSM (Local)	America's Choice Individual	America's Choice Family Share	
Monthly Fee	\$40	\$60	\$40	\$50	\$50	\$70	\$40	\$40	\$40	\$40	\$60	\$70*
Anytime Minutes	450	550	1000	1300	800	1200	Unlimited	600	*800	450	900	700
Offpeak Minutes	5000	Unlimited	Unlimited for \$5.95 extra				NA	500	1000	Unlimited		
Cost per extra minute	45¢		40¢				0	30¢		45¢	40¢	45¢
Cost of extra lines	N/A	\$10	\$15		\$20		N/A	\$20		NA		\$10*
Toll Rate (Per Minute)	0		0				0			0		
Roaming Rate (Per Minute)	0		69¢ 30¢ in expanded area*		0		25¢	0	40¢	0		
Toll Free/Roaming Free (Home) Area	Much of US		ME, NH, VT (Excludes Portsmouth Area)		Most of US		Parts of **ME, MA, NH, VT, NY	Most of US	ME, NH, VT, MA & NY	Most of US		
Notes	Rollover minutes on most plans. Extra \$1.25 "regulatory fee" applies to all plans. *Unlimited Cingular for mobile to mobile.		*Expanded area includes PA, MA, NY, CT, RI & NJ. 96¢/month "regulatory fee".				Service contract is optional— price per phone is cheaper with contract. (Our advice: choose no contract). *\$2/mo. for unlimited Unicel to Unicel calls. **Roaming charges apply in Cumberland, Androscoggin, Sagadahoc, Washington & Hancock counties (Refer to map for other states).			Verizon markets plans in Cumberland, Androscoggin, Sagadahoc & York Counties. Unlimited in calling. *2 lines included without extra charge.		

Roaming charge - applies when calling from outside home area.

Toll rate - applies only to some local plans when call destination is outside home area (applicable to some local plans only).

Important - call and check websites for latest promotions and always verify coverage quality in area of use.

Activation fees - (\$30 to \$36) often apply but are sometimes waived upon request when purchasing online, or when signing 2-year contract.

Cancellation fees - (\$150 to \$200) generally apply if you cancel service before expiration of contract term.

Cost of Phone - Phone is often free when signing a 1 or 2-year contract. Ask about current promotions.

Right to terminate - Carriers reserve the right to terminate service if 50% of usage occurs outside of their licensed area.

Features - Most plans include Caller ID, Call Forwarding, Call Waiting, 3-Way Calling, Voicemail, and other advanced features.

NOTE— For minimal or emergency usage, see prepaid plans (see page 12).

Beware that the phone offered with wireless plan may not be compatible with other wireless plans when you change service. Beware that many advertised promotions require two-year contracts, which should be avoided.

Dial 611 from cellular phones for customer service. 911 emergency calls may work from cell phones even without activation.

Each carrier may offer many other plans.

PREPAID WIRELESS PLANS - UPDATE

The following pay-as-you-go plans are attractive alternatives for those who want a wireless phone for occasional use and/or who want to avoid a long-term contract. Verizon's new prepaid service requires an extra fee of 99¢ per day. For that reason, it would not be an economical choice for the vast majority of customers and we have therefore not included Verizon's prepaid service. Net 10 offers airtime at 10¢ per minute. Furthermore, Net 10 allows you to purchase up to 3,000 minutes for \$300 for a year without having to refill or recharge your minutes during that one-year period.

SAMPLE OF PREPAID WIRELESS PLANS (see page 11 for Monthly Fee Plans)



	Tracfone (tracfone.com) sold at local retailers (800) 867-7183	Cingular Pay As You Go (cingular.com) (888) 333-6651	Net 10 (net10.com) sold at local retailers (877) 836-2368
Initial Cost - Including phone & starting minutes	*\$20 to \$130 (includes 10 minutes)	\$30 to \$100	\$30 to \$90
Home Area	Much of Maine	Much of US (spotty in Maine)	Much of US (spotty in Maine)
Airtime Rate Per Minute	20¢ to 60¢**	25¢ or 10¢*	10¢
Roaming Charge Per Minute	Double the airtime rate	0	0
Toll Charge - Per Minute	0	0**	0
Minimum Recharge Dollars	\$20	\$15	\$30
Expiration of Minutes (days)	60 - 365 (depending on card chosen)	30, 90, 180 (depending on card chosen)	60 - 365 (depending on card chosen)

Minimum Annual Cost

(Does Not Include Cost of Initial Package or Roaming Calls)

10 minutes/month	\$90 (1 - \$90 365-day refill)	\$100 (4 - \$25 90-day refills)	\$180 (6 - \$30 60-day refills)
50 minutes/month	\$180 (6 - \$30 60-day refills)	\$150 (6 - \$25 90-day refills)	\$180 (6 - \$30 60-day refills)
100 minutes/month	\$300 (6 - \$50 60-day refills)	\$300 (3 - \$100 180-day refills)	\$180 (6 - \$30 60-day refills)

NOTES

Customers who use more than 100 minutes per month should consider regular monthly fee cellular plans. Watch for and ask about promotions.

*Depending on phone, \$20 reconditioned phone with 40 min.

**Depending on number and duration of minutes purchased.

Roaming coverage in most of US.

Minutes rollover.

*With 10¢ plan, a charge of \$1.00 per day applies when there is any incoming or out going use. 10¢ plan allows unlimited mobile to mobile (Cingular to Cingular).

**15¢ per minute additional to Canada.

Minutes rollover.

Minutes rollover.

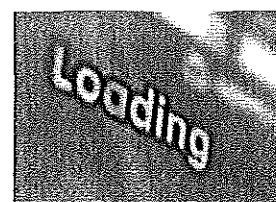
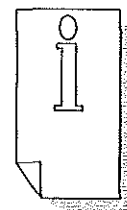
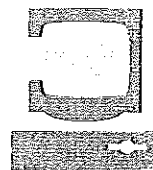
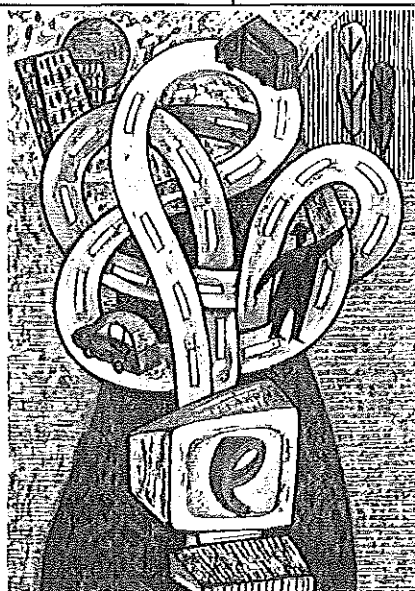
INTERNET DEPARTMENT

SAMPLE OF RESIDENTIAL INTERNET SERVICES IN MAINE

COMPANY	FEATURES	PRICES
STATEWIDE TOLL FREE DIAL-UP		
CC Net — 207-443-2211 — clinic.net	3 email addresses with 5 MB space	\$17.50 to \$20/mo. No setup fee
Dial Maine — 800-624-6380 — dialmaine.com	5 email addresses with 100 MB space	\$16 to \$20/mo. No setup fee
GWI — 866-494-2020 — gwi.net	2 email addresses with 40 MB space	\$9@10 hrs. / \$16@40 hrs. \$20 to \$23/mo. unlimited \$15 setup fee
MFX Internet — 877-432-7637 — mfx.net	1 email address with 5 MB space	\$20/mo. \$20 setup fee
Midcoast Internet — 207-594-8277 — midcoast.com	3 email addresses with 20 MB space	\$20/mo. @ 300/hrs. \$10 setup fee
Mid-Maine — 877-643-6246 — midmaine.com	5 email addresses with 20 MB space	\$15 to \$18/mo. No setup fee
MPDU — 800-721-1063 — mpdu.com	4 email addresses with 5 MB space	\$15/mo. No setup fee
NNEI — 866-500-6634 — nnei.net	1 email address with 5 MB space	\$19 to \$22/mo. No setup fee
Panax — 888-452-5100 — panax.com	3 email addresses with 5 MB space	\$14.92 to \$19/mo. No setup fee
Points South — 866-490-0100 — psouth.net	1 email address with 10 MB space	\$15.83 to \$19.50/mo. No setup fee
USA Internet — 800-288-5072 — prexar.com	2 email addresses with 6 MB space	\$18 to \$20/mo. No setup fee
Verizon — 877-483-5898 — verizon.com	1 email address with 10 MB	\$20/mo. @ 150 hours \$23/mo. - unlimited \$10 fee or signup online
XpressAmerica Internet Service — 888-504-6200 — xpressamerica.net	5 email addresses with free personal web space	\$13 to \$15/mo. No setup fee
NATIONAL ISP'S (Dial-up) check for an access # in your local toll free calling area		
550access.com — signup online — 550access.com	1 email address with 5 MB space	\$5.50/mo. @ 150 hrs. \$9/mo. @ 300 hrs. with accelerator
650dialup.com — 866-255-2164 — 650dialup.com	5 email addresses with 10 MB space	\$6.50/mo. \$8 setup fee
AOL — 800-392-5180 — aol.com	Multiple email addresses	\$23.90/mo.
AT&T Worldnet — 800-400-1447 — att.com	6 email addresses with 150 MB space	\$15/mo. if ATT cust. \$22/mo. non-ATT cust. No setup fee
Earthlink — 800-327-8454 — earthlink.net	8 email addresses with 10 MB space per email address	\$18 to \$22/mo. \$25 setup fee
uno/Netzero — 888-349-0029 — netzero.net juno.com	Email on the web with 250 MB space	\$10/mo. \$15/mo. with accelerator

COMPANY		FEATURES	PRICES
NATIONAL ISP'S (Dial-up) (continued) check for an access # in your local toll free calling area			
Localnet — 888-488-7265 — localnet.com		10 email addresses with 10 MB space	\$10/mo. \$13/mo. with accelerator
Netscape — 800-716-7445 — getnetscape.com		Email on the web with 10 MB space	\$10/mo. \$15/mo. with accelerator
Peoplepc — 877-947-3327 — peoplepc.com		4 emails with 10 MB space	\$11/mo. \$13/mo. with accelerator
USAdatanet — 800-290-2655 — usadatanet.com		Unlimited email addresses	\$10/mo. \$15/mo. with accelerator
COMPANY	AREA SERVED	FEATURES	PRICES
WIRELESS HIGH SPEED INTERNET			
Clinic.net 207-443-2211 clinic.net	Available in parts of Cumberland, Androscoggin, Sagadahoc, Lincoln, and Aroostook counties	3 email addresses with 5 MB space	Res. \$25/mo. Bus. \$60/mo. \$125 setup fee + \$10/mo. equipment lease
Downeast Wireless 207-667-7414 downeastwireless.net	Available in Ellsworth area	3 email addresses with 5 MB space	\$25/mo. \$450 to \$700 setup fee
MFX Internet 877-432-7637 mfx.net	Presque Isle, Caribou, Mars Hill, Houlton, Sleepy Hollow, Mapleton and part of Fort Fairfield	10 email addresses with 5 MB space	\$40/mo. Plus \$8 each additional PC \$100 setup fee
Midcoast Internet 207-594-8277 midcoast.com	Various locations in the mid-coast area	4 email addresses with 20 MB space	\$50/mo. \$295 setup fee
Pioneer Wireless 866-335-1254 pwless.net	Northern Maine - Medway to Fort Kent	5 email addresses with 10 MB space	Res. \$35/mo. Bus. \$45/mo. Setup fee \$99 - \$199
SVJ Wireless, Inc. 877-475-8638 svj.net	Fort Kent, Wallagrass, some areas of St. John	1 email with 3 MB space	Res. \$35/mo. Bus. \$50/mo. Res. Installation \$99 Bus. Installation \$199
DSL HIGH SPEED INTERNET			
LOCAL PHONE COMPANIES	Usually within 3 miles of phone company central office	Call local phone company for details	Res. (\$30/mo. - \$60/mo.) Call company for rates
Acadia Net 800-994-6375 acadia.net	Available throughout Maine in selected exchanges	5 email/residential - 10 email/business - with 50 MB space	Res. \$35-\$55/mo. Bus. \$80-\$120/mo. Bus. \$250 setup fee
GWI 866-494-2020 gwi.net	Available in 40 exchanges within Verizon's territory	5 email addresses with 40 MB space	Res. \$29/mo. Bus. \$50/mo. 35 No setup fee
MXF Internet 877-432-7637 mfx.net	Presque Isle, Caribou and Houlton areas	10 email addresses with 5 MB space	Res. \$35/mo. Bus. \$60/mo.
Midcoast Internet 207-594-8277 midcoast.com	Available throughout Maine in selected exchanges	4 email addresses with 20 MB space	\$35/mo. Verizon customers \$50/mo. Non-Vz customers \$75 setup fee
Midmaine 877-643-6246 midmaine.com	Available throughout Maine in selected exchanges	5 email addresses with 20 MB space	Res. \$30/mo. Bus. \$60/mo. \$75 installation fee & \$150 equipment fee
Oxford Networks 800-520-9911 oxfordnetworks.com	Lewiston/Auburn (not all areas yet) and Norway/South Paris	5 email addresses with 10 MB space	Res. \$38/mo. Bus. \$60-\$80/mo.

COMPANY	AREA SERVED	FEATURES	PRICES
DSL HIGH SPEED INTERNET (continued)			
Pivot.Net 800-400-5568 pivot.net	Available in selected exchanges	5 email addresses with 10 MB space	\$35/mo.
Verizon 877-483-5398 verizon.com	Available in much of Verizon territory	9 email addresses with 10 MB space	Res. \$38/mo. Bus. \$60/mo. Res. \$15 w/1 yr. contract
CABLE MODEM HIGH SPEED INTERNET			
Adelphia 888-683-1000 adelphia.com	Central Maine area	Multiple email addresses with 10 MB space	Res. \$43/mo. Bus. \$70/mo. Install. fee varies +\$5/mo. modem rental
Comcast 888-633-4266 comcast.com	Berwick, So. Berwick, Eliot & Kittery	7 email addresses with 10 MB space	\$43/mo. cable TV customer \$58/mo. non-cable TV customer
Metrocast Online 800-695-2545 metrocastcablevision.com	Acton, Lebanon, Sanford, Shapleigh, Springvale	2 email addresses with 40 MB space	\$30/mo. +\$2.50/mo. modem rental \$100 installation fee
Pine Tree Cablevision 800-220-3320 ptc-me.net	Machias area	3 email addresses with 10 MB space	\$21 to \$49/mo. +\$5/mo. modem rental \$50 installation fee
Susquehanna 207-729-6663 suscom.com	Brunswick and Freeport areas	1 email address with 10 MB space	Res. \$30/mo. Bus. \$52/mo. \$30 installation fee
Time Warner 908-333-2253 wmaine.com	York, Cumberland and Aroostook Counties	8 email addresses with 10 MB space	\$45/mo. No installation fee
SATELLITE			
Direcway 888-667-5537 direcway.com	Available statewide (Generally requires clear view of so. sky)	5 email addresses with 10 MB space	\$60/mo. + \$600 equipment cost
Skycasters 800-853-0434 skycasters.com	Available statewide (Generally requires clear view of so. sky)	2 email accounts	\$80/mo. + \$600 equipment & installation cost
Starband 800-478-2722 starband.com	Available statewide (Generally requires clear view of so. sky)	20 email addresses with 10 MB space	\$70/mo. + at least \$500 equipment cost



**Public Advocate Office
112 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0112**

Calling Plans **INTERNET SERVICES** **LOCAL COMPETITION** *Wireless Services*
SURCHARGES **BUSINESS PHONE RATES** **PREPAID SERVICES**
INTERNATIONAL SERVICES **TELECOMMUNICATIONS NEWS** *SHOPPING TIPS*

PUBLIC ADVOCATE AND STAFF:



**From left to right:
M. Wayne, Patty, Ron, Mary, Eric, Debbie, Steve & Bill**

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