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# Ratewatcher Telecom Guide, Vol. 19 May 2007

Maine Public Advocate Office

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# Ratewatcher

## TELECOM GUIDE

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## VERIZON'S SALE TO FAIRPOINT—IT'S A DEAL ...But Not a Done Deal

**O**N JANUARY 31, 2007 VERIZON AND FAIRPOINT FILED FOR APPROVAL to transfer to Fairpoint Communications nearly all of Verizon's telephone and DSL operations in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont—for a price of over \$2.7 billion. This is a very big bite to chew on for a small company like Fairpoint. While it currently serves just over 300,000 telephone lines in 18 states, it will be serving about 1.6 million lines if the transaction is approved. If approved, this would be the most significant change in ownership of Maine's telecommunications network since the beginning of phone service over 100 years ago. Fairpoint currently operates 6 of Maine's 22 independent rural local telephone companies.

The sale cannot go forward unless it is approved by the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), which is expected to make its decision by November. The Public Advocate, recognizing the importance of this case, has retained four expert witnesses to testify at the PUC. The Public Advocate will carefully review all of the evidence before deciding whether to oppose this deal or to conditionally support it. We will seek to ensure that any transfer to Fairpoint will be in the public interest. While our investigation of the evidence is just getting underway, we can already anticipate some potential positive and negative consequences that will require careful scrutiny by the PUC (see sidebar).

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF FAIRPOINT

- 1991** ... Company founded as MJD Communications.
- 1993** ... Newly formed company of four people obtained financial backing and bought its first telephone company, acquiring 4,500 telephone lines in rural Kansas and Colorado.
- 2006** ... Fairpoint owned 31 rural telephone companies in 17 states, serving 308,858 telephone lines, including 6 local telephone companies in Maine.
- 2007** ... Fairpoint proposes its acquisition of over 1.5 million telephone lines in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

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### verizon > fairpoint

#### What Might It Mean For Telephone Customers?

##### Possible Benefits

**HIGH SPEED INTERNET** Fairpoint has promised a more aggressive expansion of DSL service in Maine's rural areas. While we like the sound of that, we know that promises are not always kept unless they are specific and enforceable.

**RESPONSIVENESS TO CUSTOMERS AND REGULATORS** Verizon's sheer size and vast geographic footprint meant that Maine represented only a tiny piece of the company. Under those circumstances, Verizon's top management was not always responsive to the needs of its Maine customers. Fairpoint, being a much smaller company, may be more eager to please customers and regulators in Maine.

##### Possible Harms

**FINANCIAL CAPABILITY** The acquisition of Verizon's networks in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont will leave Fairpoint with substantial debt obligations and it may not have the financial strength to keep its promises about service improvements. We will be looking for any signs that Fairpoint could have trouble investing in the network, providing good customer service, or meeting its financial obligations, while keeping rates as low as possible.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE QUALITY** The Public Advocate is already concerned about Fairpoint's commitment to a high level of service quality. Fairpoint is saying all the right things, but its historical performance in Maine is not entirely reassuring.

cont'd on page 2

# OPA Files Rate Arguments as Verizon Announces Acquisition

In January, the Public Advocate filed final arguments in the Verizon revenue investigation ... just as Verizon announced its plan to be acquired by Fairpoint Communications.

In our 147 page brief, the Public Advocate recommended substantial local telephone service rate reductions and a plan for regulation over the next five years that will adequately protect Maine's telephone consumers. Soon, the Public Utilities Commission will issue its decision on this long, drawn out battle between Maine's consumers and Maine's largest telephone company. But the twists and turns continue — just as the case was approaching its end, Verizon announced that it would be selling most of its telephone and DSL operations in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, as we predicted last October in the *Ratewatcher*.

The Public Advocate has urged the Commission to expeditiously conclude the rate and regulation plan case irrespective of the Fairpoint transaction. Fairpoint has been fully aware of the pending Verizon proceeding and should be ready to accept the results of that proceeding. Fairpoint would be providing the same services as Verizon, using most of the

same employees. If Fairpoint cannot provide service at the same or lower rates than Verizon, then customers will be adversely affected. If customers are adversely affected, then, under Maine law, the Commission may not approve the transaction.

The following is an excerpt from our brief:

At the time that the Commission turned down the Public Advocate's first request for a revenue requirement investigation [in 1999], Verizon had far more access lines — and more revenue — than it does today. Ironically, the intent of the Commission then was to provide the maximum incentives for efficiency, investment and innovation by Verizon in the State of Maine. The result, of course, has been disappointment — declining investment, declining service quality, poor performance in broadband deployment, over-earnings, and most recently, Verizon's announcement that it will abandon the state entirely. Whatever the reasons that Verizon decided to sell its network in Maine, excessive regulation certainly cannot be reasonably cited as a factor. The second five year regulation plan granted Verizon complete pricing flexibility for all but three services.

## VERIZON > FAIRPOINT

Cont'd from page 1

**PRICE OF DSL SERVICE** While Verizon failed to sufficiently extend DSL service in less populated areas, Verizon's price for DSL has been as low as \$15 per month. However, Fairpoint (and other independent telephone companies) has typically charged much higher DSL rates. We will be looking to see whether Fairpoint will commit to more affordable DSL pricing.

### FAIRPOINT'S ACCEPTANCE OF RATE REDUCTIONS

As *Ratewatcher* readers know, the Public Advocate has pursued litigation against Verizon for several years, and we recently filed our final arguments showing that Verizon's rates should be reduced by as much as \$6 per line — or \$42 million per year. If the Fairpoint transaction somehow precludes a rate reduction that the Commission would have imposed upon Verizon, then Maine's ratepayers would be adversely affected by this transaction.

**LABOR UNION CONCERNS** Two large labor unions, Communication Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, have set out to actively oppose the Fairpoint deal. They will be active in the PUC proceeding, and will attempt to demonstrate that Fairpoint lacks financial and other necessary resources to operate the Verizon networks in the three states. The unions are also concerned that their pensions, wages and benefits might be cut by the new company.

**CONCERNS ABOUT MAINE'S INDEPENDENT TELEPHONE CUSTOMERS** As the dominant telephone company in Maine, Fairpoint would operate Maine's E-911 network, provide directory and operator services, and other common functions that Maine's smaller telephone companies (and their customers) rely upon. Fairpoint must demonstrate that it can operate these important functions.

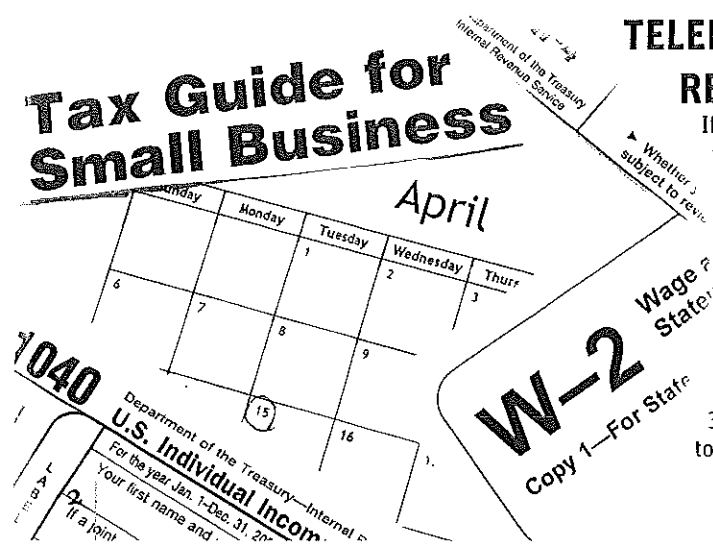
## Tax Guide for Small Business

### TELEPHONE TAX REFUND

If you haven't filed your 2006 tax return yet, don't forget to claim your telephone excise tax refund — \$30 to \$60 without any documentation (residential customers only), or the actual tax payments for a recent 41-month period of long-distance phone bills. Reports indicate that over 30% of taxpayers are forgetting to take their refund.

### reminder for low-income customers

If you qualify for any type of public assistance, you also qualify for Lifeline service. Lifeline service provides a steep discount on your monthly telephone bill and, if you currently have no telephone service, you may have it installed for just \$10.



## >> local service competition

Most residential Verizon customers will get the lowest rates for telephone service by staying with Verizon's basic local service and choosing a separate low-cost long-distance provider. Alternative local service is also provided by other carriers who offer combined unlimited local/long-distance plans. Those plans (see page 4) are suitable for customers who make a very high volume of toll calls. Business customers may realize savings by choosing one of the following competitors of Verizon.

<b>AT&amp;T One Rate</b> (800) 205-6268 att.net	R	\$33 Unlimited plan also available	2 features
<b>BCN Telecom</b> (888) 484-5454 bcntele.com	B & R	B — \$26–\$30 per line* R — \$18.33 per line	*Depending on customer location
<b>Excel</b> (877) 668-0808 excel.com	R	\$35* with 3 features (Requires Excel long distance)	*depending on location and long-distance plan. Includes 100 LD minutes
<b>Mid-Maine</b> (877) 643-6246 midmaine.com	B & R	B — \$26–\$32* (depending on contract length) R — \$50—local/DSL bundle	Selected exchanges *No added line charge
<b>One Communications</b> (800) 825-5282 onecommunications.com	B	\$31 to \$34 per line (depending on contract length)  R — \$16.63–\$19.72* B — \$31.28–\$40.34*	Throughout Verizon territory  Norway/South Paris (Unlimited plans also available) *No added line charge
<b>Oxford</b> (800) 520-9911 oxfordnetworks.com	B & R	R — \$25 (\$31.90 with features)* B — \$28–\$32 depending on number of lines & bundled services*	Lewiston/Auburn Business service available in various exchanges (Unlimited plans also available) *No added line charge
<b>PineTree</b> (866) 746-3873 pinetreenetworks.com	B	\$25–\$35 per line*	Selected exchanges *No added line charge
<b>Telrite</b> (866) 285-3989 telrite.com	B & R	\$25–\$35 (depending on contract length)	Throughout Verizon territory
<b>USA Telephone</b> (877) 872-2800 savewithusa.com	B & R	R — \$25–\$30 (depending on area) B — \$37–\$40 per line	Local service bundled with 2.9¢ instate and interstate LD minutes and 6 features

Compare Verizon's Local Rates: Res.—\$17.79 economy, \$19.29 premium; Bus.—\$35.38 economy, \$38.49 premium

\*No added line charge saves \$6.50/month.

## STILL PAYING FOR INSIDE WIRE MAINTENANCE?

The problem is, inside telephone wiring just doesn't need much maintenance. It has no moving parts and is not exposed to outside elements. If this monthly charge is on your bill, consider dropping this high-priced optional insurance.

## >> unlimited calling plans (and optional broadband)

The following calling plans combine unlimited local calling with unlimited long-distance calling for one price. Some offer DSL or cable Internet service as well. One of these plans may be of interest to you if you:

- Make at least 350 instate toll calls per month
- Make over 800 minutes of toll calls per month nationally
- Are willing to pay extra for optional features
- Prefer to get one constant bill combining various services regardless of usage

<b>AT&amp;T One Rate</b> (800) 222-0300 att.com	Unlimited to U.S. 4 features	\$62	N/A	\$33	N/A	Voicemail — add \$7
<b>GWI GWiLINE</b> (866) 494-2020 gwi.net	Unlimited to U.S. & Canada 5 features* (optional)	\$33 if with DSL* (\$43 w/o DSL*)	N/A	N/A	\$63*	Available in selected exchanges *\$5 extra w/ features inc. voicemail
<b>Homefield</b> (877) 872-2800 savewithusa.com	Unlimited to U.S. & Canada 3 features	\$47	\$39	N/A	\$67 (\$60 for DSL and instate toll)	Throughout Verizon territory
<b>IDT Unlimited</b> (800) 254-1718 idt.net	Unlimited to U.S. 6 features	\$40	\$32	\$28	\$56	Voicemail \$2.95/mon.
<b>Mid-Maine</b> (877) 643-6246 midmaine.com	Unlimited to U.S. 3 features	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$65 (\$35/mo. for 3 months)	Selected exchanges 1-year contract required or \$75 early termination fee *No added line charge
<b>Oxford Networks</b> 800-520-9911 oxfordnetworks.com	Unlimited to U.S. & Canada 5 features* (optional)	\$50* (\$43 w/o features)	N/A	\$18	\$81*	Lewiston/Auburn and Norway/S. Paris area only *no added line charge
<b>Pine Tree Networks</b> 866-746-3873 pinetreenetworks.com	Unlimited to U.S. & Canada 3 features	\$60*	N/A	N/A	\$90	Selected exchanges *No added line charge
<b>Time Warner Cable</b> 800-833-2253 timewarnercable.com	Unlimited to U.S. & Canada Advanced features	\$40*	\$30*	N/A	\$80*	Enhanced VOIP Most of Maine *No added line charge
<b>Verizon Freedom</b> 800-870-9999 verizon.com	Unlimited to U.S., & Puerto Rico 3 features	\$45* (\$40 w/out features)	\$33 (with 3 features—voicemail \$5)	NA	\$65	Includes voicemail *Canada add \$5

\*No added line charge saves \$6.50

All prices exclude surcharges and taxes.

# >> prepaid calling

**THE BAD NEWS** AT&T has tripled its rates for instate prepaid calls.

**THE GOOD NEWS** The choice is easy—for prepaid minutes, try onesuite.com for calls made away from home.

AT&T now deducts three of your prepaid minutes for each minute of call time when your call stays instate. This rate increase applies to calls in Maine, and to instate calls in a variety of other states. Some customers are asking: does it cost AT&T three times as much to handle a Maine instate call compared

to a call from Maine to California? The answer is NO.

AT&T/Sam's is no longer recommended for Maine instate calling. However, it remains a reasonable option for interstate calls. Onesuite.com is a better bargain in many respects but their minutes expire if you don't buy more

within 6 months — AT&T/Sam's prepaid minutes do not expire, but existing cardholders may need to request reactivation of older minutes. If you don't have Internet access, you may still buy onesuite's minutes by using a computer at your local library — or by asking a friend to purchase them for you.

US Rate 48 (states)	8.52¢ instate / 2.84¢ interstate	2.9¢
Western Europe	11.36¢–19.88¢	3.4¢–9¢
Canada	8.52¢	3.2¢
Other Fees	5% sales tax on initial store purchase 15% surcharge on phone refills	None
How to buy?	Sam's Club (similar offers at BJ's & Costco) or renew by phone	www.onesuite.com
Expiration	No Expiration — holders of older cards may call customer service # on card to reactivate minutes	6 months from activation or last recharge
Record of calls	No	Yes via Internet
Use from other countries?	Yes	Yes  Local access numbers in foreign countries allow low-cost calling to U.S.
Rate to U.S. from Canada	14.2¢	3.5¢
Payphone Charge	\$1.00	55¢
Other Features	Enhanced features offered at extra charge	\$1/month "Message One" sends voice mail and faxes to your email address  Lower "local access" rates available in certain areas or when using VOIP access from your computer
Customer Service #	(800) 335-8900	(866) 417-8483

## we suggest...

The Public Advocate suggests that the best way to call from home is with a direct pre-subscription to a low-cost, full-service long-distance company such as Touchtone or Pioneer (choose Touchtone if you are served by an independent local phone company). The price for direct-dial long-distance is just about as low as prepaid calling (considering 6-second vs. 1-minute billing) and the service is better. (See page 6.)

Note: International calls to mobile phones are often priced much higher. All rates are per-minute.

## LEGAL QUESTIONS ABOUT AT&T'S PREPAID CARD RATE INCREASE

Many customers in Maine were surprised when they noticed that AT&T had deducted 3 minutes for each minute of talking after making an instate call. Regulators were also surprised because they had not yet approved that new rate. If you believe that your minute balance was reduced without advance notice to you, or that you paid higher rates than those advertised at the place where

you bought the prepaid card, you should **complain to the Public Utilities Commission by calling 800 452-4699**. If many complaints are received and we find that this problem is widespread, the Public Advocate will consider requesting a formal investigation and seeking refunds of all rates that were charged unlawfully.

## >> long-distance plans

Touchtone and Pioneer remain our top recommendations for customers who use fewer than 800 minutes of toll calling per month and want direct-dial presubscribed long-distance service. If you are served by an independent rural local phone company, choose Touchtone, because Pioneer charges higher rates in those areas. Note the decrease in Touchtone's rate.

COMPANY	PIONEER pioneertelephone.com		TOUCHTONE touchtone.net		VERIZON verizon.com	
<b>(RESIDENTIAL)</b>	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate
RESIDENTIAL per minute rate (excluding surcharges & taxes)	3.5¢	3.25¢	3.9¢	3.9¢	7¢	5¢
Monthly Minimum	none		none		none	
Monthly Fee	99¢*		none		\$6.00	
<b>SAMPLE RESIDENTIAL MONTHLY COSTS</b>	Includes 50% instate/50% interstate minutes & monthly fees, excluding surcharges & taxes.					
LOW @ 10 mins. per month	\$1.34		39¢		\$6.60	
MEDIUM @ 100 mins. per month	\$4.37		\$3.90		\$12.00	
HIGH @ 500 mins. per month	\$16.88*		\$19.50		\$36.00	
HIGHEST @ 1,000 mins. per month	\$33.75*		\$39		\$66.00	
Hawaii/Alaska	6.9¢		7.9¢/15¢		5¢	
<b>SAMPLE RESIDENTIAL INTERNATIONAL RATES</b>						
Brazil	7.9¢		10¢		\$4.20	
Canada	3.9¢		3.9¢		90¢	
Greece	4.5¢		9¢		\$4.37	
Japan	4.9¢		4.9¢		\$3.32	
Somalia	77¢		1.10¢		\$6.09	
United Kingdom	4.9¢		4.9¢		\$2.50	
Available in rural independent areas?	no		yes		no	
<b>(BUSINESS)</b>	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate	Instate	Interstate
Business per minute rates (excluding surcharges and taxes)	3.5¢	2.7¢	3.9¢	3.9¢	5.5¢	5.5¢
Monthly Minimum	none		none		\$65.00	
Monthly Fee	99¢*		none		none	
PICC Charges (per line)	\$2.95		\$2		\$3.40	
In-bound 800 Rates	3.5¢**	2.7¢**	3.9¢**	3.9¢**	5.5¢*	5.5¢*
NOTE: Surcharges are not included in the rates shown	*99¢ fee waived w/online billing or usage over \$15		*Touchtone Agents in Maine: 888-594-2500, 877-839- 8484 or 800 619-2537		*\$5/mo. fee applies to 800 inbound service	
\$5 fee to change carrier is often covered by new carrier upon request	**99¢/mo. per 800 number		6-second billing		6-second billing applies to most business plans	
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		Lower rate may be available for high-volume customers		1-minute billing for residential	
1-minute billing unless otherwise noted	6-second billing		Customer service 800-266- 4006		International rates are much lower with advance sign-up and monthly fee	
An average customer will save about 10% as a result of 6-second billing	Pioneer is a Maine company		**\$1.99/mo. per 800 number			
*Beware that international calls to mobile phones priced much higher	1.9¢/min. to call other Pioneer customers					

# Still Paying More Than 4¢ Per Minute or Monthly Fees for Long-distance Service?

## IT'S TIME TO MAKE A CHANGE

For many years, we've been recommending Touchtone Communications and Pioneer Telephone as two of the best choices for long-distance service. That recommendation has not changed. Each offers very low rates, good customer service, 6-second billing, and most surprisingly, we have never received a single serious complaint about either company. All it takes is one toll-free call to make the change.

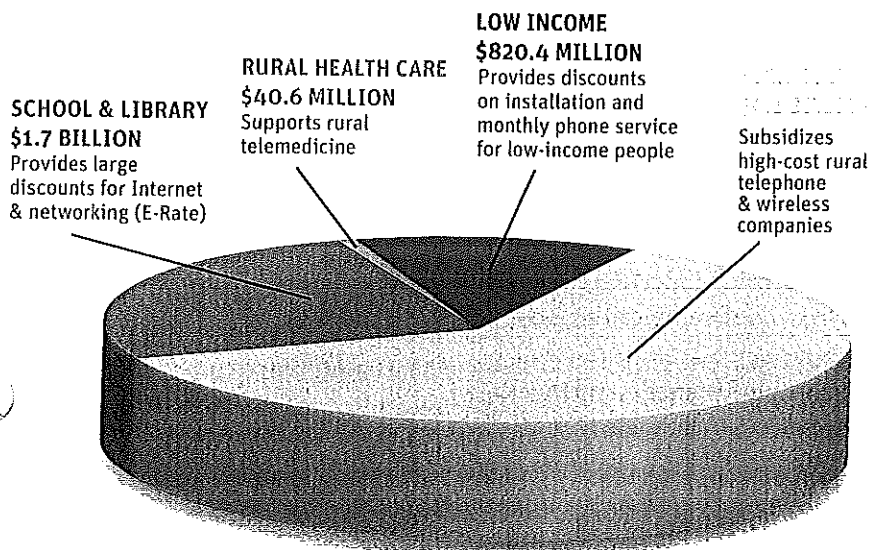
Many customers who thought they were getting a bargain by switching to prepaid calling cards, or to bundled local and long-distance plans, were making the wrong comparison — often to the higher rates of AT&T or Verizon. The correct comparison would consider the rates of long-distance providers like Pioneer and Touchtone. Unless you use over 800 minutes of long-distance each month, you will likely pay less with one of these two low-cost long-distance plans. As an added bonus, the basic international rates charged by these two companies are much lower than the "discounted rates" you get only if you pay an extra monthly fee to the big phone companies. Without paying that extra fee, you would pay the sky-high international rates of Verizon, shown on the page 6.

## Universal Service Fund Contribution Factor Jumped from 9.7% to 11.7% on April 1

As a result of lower industry revenues and growing demand for the federal USF programs, the surcharge collected on telephone, wireless, and VOIP bills, rose by over 20% this quarter. This will add to the pressure on Congress and the FCC to overhaul this fund. The Public Advocate supports major changes that would reduce the size of the USF, which has become a burden for average consumers.

The USF supports four programs with over \$7.5 billion annually. 2006 USF disbursements were as follows:

### USF PAYMENTS IN 2006



## Privacy Complaint Filed At Maine PUC Will Be Heard In San Francisco!

As reported in the October issue, the federal Department of Justice (DOJ) filed suit against Maine's Public Utilities Commissioners after they took mild steps to look into a complaint filed by a group of Maine citizens. The complainants sought an investigation concerning Verizon's possible unlawful cooperation with the National Security Agency (NSA). Widespread media reports suggested that large phone companies may have allowed warrantless wiretapping and the release of telephone customer records in violation of state and federal privacy laws.

As the nine-month deadline for resolving this complaint approached, the Public Advocate and the complainants urged the PUC to act. Soon after, the PUC scheduled a hearing for Verizon to explain why it should not be held in contempt for failing to answer a PUC order to affirm, under oath, its denials of cooperation with the NSA. Then, just days before that contempt hearing, the DOJ asked a federal court in Bangor to restrain the PUC from acting. Unfortunately, the federal court in Maine granted the injunction based on little more than an affidavit from an NSA official claiming that an affirmation by Verizon, under oath, would cause grave breaches of national security.

At about the same time, a federal court in Miami ruled that all similar cases across the nation should be consolidated and heard by one federal judge in San Francisco. Now, we will wait for a complex set of cases with differing facts to work its way through that court proceeding — and the wait could be long.



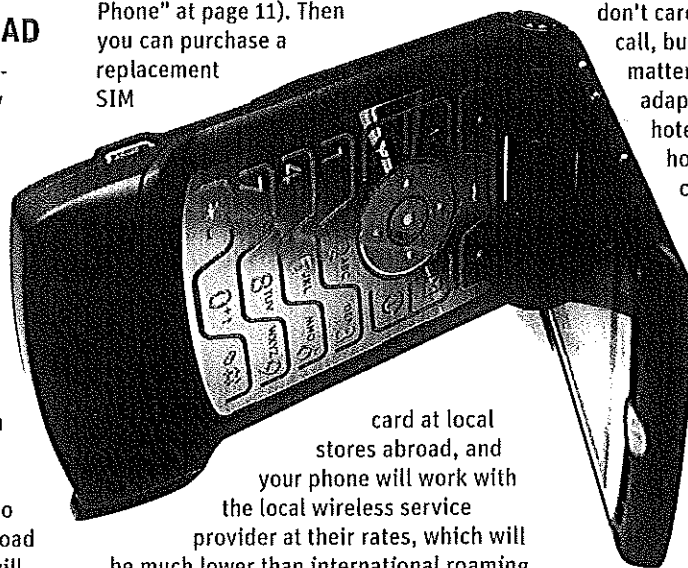
# Telephone Options for International Travelers

In the world of wireless calling, many things change when you cross an international border, including the U.S./Canada border — but just the opposite is true with Voice Over Internet calling. Here are some things to keep in mind when using either of those services abroad:

## USING A CELL PHONE ABROAD

In Maine, many customers are on CDMA-based networks, while the vast majority of foreign wireless services work on the GSM standard, so it's unlikely that your phone will work abroad if you don't have a GSM phone. Even if you do have a GSM phone, your phone may be capable of using only the American GSM frequencies — 1900 and 850 MHz — while most of the GSM world uses 1800 and 900 MHz (however, triple and quad-band phones are available). To make matters worse, even if your cell phone could work abroad, it is probably locked to your American provider's service and you would need to get it unlocked. If you used a phone abroad while it is locked to a U.S. carrier, you will be charged very high international roaming rates. Be aware that some less developed countries prohibit cell phone use by visitors. Finally, if you decide to bring your cell phone despite all of these hurdles, make sure it accepts local electrical voltage or bring a suitable voltage converter.

**THE SIM SOLUTION** The SIM is a replaceable thumbnail sized card inside a GSM phone. It is the brains of the phone and determines the phone number. If you have a GSM phone, you may be able to use it abroad if you have it unlocked from your carrier's service (see, "Free The Cell Phone" at page 11). Then you can purchase a replacement SIM



card at local stores abroad, and your phone will work with the local wireless service provider at their rates, which will be much lower than international roaming rates. In many countries, you can also buy prepaid minutes to load into a new local SIM card via a numerical code.

**NEW PHONE SOLUTION** If you don't mind giving up the convenience of your current phone, the cheapest option is likely to be a

new phone. In some countries, local stores sell GSM phones with SIM cards ready to be loaded with prepaid minutes for as little as \$50.

## USING VOIP ABROAD

Unlike wireless services, VOIP services don't care where you are when you make a call, but the destination of your call does matter. You can bring your VOIP phone adapter with you and plug it into your hotel's broadband connection, a home wireless network, an Internet café, or public WiFi hotspot. When someone dials your local Maine number, your phone will ring there even if you're in Madagascar. In addition, if you want a local number abroad, some VOIP services will provide that as well. If you're not a current VOIP user, you can still take advantage of VOIP calling from abroad. Just download Skype at [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com), then plug your laptop computer into a broadband connection and you're ready to make free or very low-cost international calls. You can also purchase a phone number for incoming calls, for about \$36 per year. If you'll be in an urban area with WiFi hotspots, you may consider a wireless VOIP phone instead of relying on your laptop.

## Free Full-featured Conference Calling? What's The Catch?

There are many new free conference calling services that allow you to invite a few friends, or even a big crowd, to join you on a conference call. All you have to do is provide your email address and then, you immediately get a dial-in number and PIN number to provide to your conference participants. There are no fees for the service, but normal long-distance rates apply because the dial-in number is not toll-free. Of course, if your long-distance minutes are under 4 cents per minute, as they should be, that's not a big expense. The free services even include lots of advanced features, including recording capabilities.

So, is there a catch? Perhaps, but not to the consumer. We've noticed that most of these services provide a dial-in number from Iowa's 712 area code. It so happens that there are some small rural local telephone companies in Iowa that charge high per-minute access fees to any long-distance company that terminates a call there. The local phone company then shares some of those fees with the conference calling service — that's how the "free" conference calling service makes money. So there is a catch — but your long-distance company is picking up the tab — not you.

This perk may not last forever — some big wireless and wireline

carriers (which pay those high access rates when their subscribers use these services), have recently sued to end this practice. But, for now, you can try one of the following free conference call services the next time you need to plan a family reunion or when you just feel like talking to all of your friends at once.

[freeconferencecall.com](http://freeconferencecall.com)  
[foonz.com](http://foonz.com)  
[totallyfreeconferencecalls.com](http://totallyfreeconferencecalls.com)  
[mrconference.com](http://mrconference.com)  
[nocostconference.com](http://nocostconference.com)  
[freeaudioconferencing.com](http://freeaudioconferencing.com)  
[freeconferencing.liveoffice.com](http://freeconferencing.liveoffice.com)

# VOIP Service—Choices, Quality and Features Are Improving

If you have a high-speed Internet connection and a microphone, you have everything you need to try VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol). VOIP services come in three general flavors:

- **low cost and free basic services** (such as Skype) that require no equipment aside from a computer,
- **full featured services with monthly fees**, that use a hardware adapter (such as Vonage), and
- **premium services** (such as Time Warner) which interconnect with local telephone companies and use a proprietary network, as opposed to the public Internet.

**WHAT'S THE RISK?** All VOIP services have one fundamental flaw — they

require an electric power supply. Traditional phone service is backed up with battery power and remains viable during electrical outages. The bare-bones services like Skype do not provide enhanced emergency 911 services and should not be relied upon for emergency service. Subscription services like Vonage are required to provide full emergency service but, because VOIP service is portable, you'll need to register your location. VOIP sound quality can be as good as traditional phone service but that's not always the case.

**WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT VOIP?** VOIP services are becoming more user-friendly. While most work with regu-

lar telephones, many services are now also offering wireless VOIP phones so that you can move around your house like you would with a cordless telephone, or connect at a WiFi hot spot. While most customers aren't ready to fully substitute their phone service with a VOIP service, it is now possible to keep your old phone number and have it transferred to your VOIP service. VOIP services are rich in features and provide various functions that are not possible with traditional phone service. One such feature is portability — you can use it from any place in the world, as long as you have a high-speed (broadband) Internet connection.

## >> voip services and plans

FREE/LOW COST/COMPUTER-BASED			
<b>JAJAH</b> jajah.com	Dial call on computer—then talk on your regular phone	Free to other Jajah users 2.8¢–3.2¢/min.	Innovative new service requires no software or equipment
<b>PULVER</b> Free World Dialup pulver.com	Unlimited to other members (May ring regular phone numbers w/separate service)	FREE	Can work with a special telephone or free software
<b>SIPPHONE</b> sipphone.com	Unlimited to other Sipphones May ring regular phone numbers	Free to other Sipphones Reg. calls start at 1¢	Using telephone adapter (\$60) or computer software (free)
<b>SKYPE</b>   skype.com (also GoogleTalk, AIM [AOL], iChat, Yahoo, and Onesuite)	Unlimited worldwide PC to PC and low rates to ring regular phone numbers	Free to other Skype users Reg. calls start at 2.1¢	Using computer mic/speakers, or headset Incoming phone # (skypeIn) \$36/yr
<b>WEBPHONE</b> webphone.com	Webphone to Webphone PC to Phone calls	FREE 1.9¢/minute	Minimum purchase \$15
SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES WITH PHONE ADAPTER			
<b>AROOSTOOK INTERNET</b> AINOP Phone 800-752-4330 ainopphone.com	Unlimited to US, Canada & Mexico	\$35/month	Adapter \$84 No activation fee
	300 US minutes	\$26/month	
<b>AT&amp;T CALLVANTAGE</b> att.com/callvantage	Unlimited to US & Canada, Puerto Rico	\$25/month (\$30 activation fee) Europe—5¢ to 9¢	\$30 early termination fee may apply if cancelled within 1 year Adapter included
	Unlimited in Maine	\$10/month +3.9¢/min. interstate & Canada & low international rates	Adapter included \$40 activation fee \$10 with own device
	Unlimited World (US + 21 countries)	\$20/month Europe 3¢ to 8¢	

Cont'd on next page

## >> voip services and plans cont'd

<b>LINGO</b> lingo.com	Unlimited to US, Canada & Western Europe	\$22/month	\$30 activation fee First month free \$40 first year termination fee
	500 Minutes US, Canada & Western Europe	\$15/month	
<b>NET2PHONE</b> net2phone.com (also available from IDT)	Unlimited US & Canada	\$30/month—Europe 5¢ to 8¢	\$40 first year termination fee Requires prepayment \$30 activation fee Adapter included
	Unlimited Europe or bundled rates for specific countries	+ \$40/month	
	500 minutes US & Canada	\$15/month	
<b>PACKET8</b> packet8.net	350 minutes Western Europe	\$15/month	
	Freedom Unlimited US, & Canada	\$20/month—Europe 3¢ to 8¢	\$30 Activation fee Adapter not included Claims ok with dialup
	Freedom Unlimited Global Unlimited Calls to 40 European & Asia countries/cities included	\$50 extra per continent/month	
<b>SUNROCKET</b> sunrocket.com	200 minutes US, Canada, Puerto Rico & 41 International Countries/Cities	\$10/month	\$40 Adapter if needed Free Activation
	Unlimited to US, Canada, Puerto Rico	\$25/month	
<b>VERIZON</b> VoiceWing www22.verizon.com	500 minutes US, Canada & Puerto Rico	\$20/month (VW to VW calls are free)	Required 1-year term or \$40 early termination fee Adapter included
	Unlimited US, Canada & Puerto Rico	\$25/month	
<b>VOICEPULSE</b> voicepulse.com	Unlimited US	\$25/month	Adapter included Required 1-year term
	Unlimited ME + 200 Long Distance minutes	\$15/month Europe 5¢ to 9¢	
<b>VOIPYOURLIFE</b> voipyourlife.com	Unlimited US & Canada	\$24/month	Free hardware; Free activation Choose US or Canada phone # No term commitment or fee
	Unlimited US, Canada & over 30 countries	\$30/month	
<b>VONAGE</b> vonage.com	Unlimited US, Canada & Puerto Rico	\$25/month	\$30 Activation fee Adapter included Includes some calls to Europe Business Plans - \$40 - \$50
	500 Minutes	\$15/month (3.9¢/min. after 500 included) Europe—3¢ to 8¢	

### PRIVATE NETWORKS

<b>DIGIPHONE</b> Beeline Cable 800-439-4611	Unlimited to US, Hawaii, Alaska & Canada	\$35/month (if Bee Line Cable Customer) \$40/month for others	No adapter needed Beeline Cable area only Free installation
<b>TIME WARNER CABLE</b> Digital Phone timewarnercable.com	Unlimited US, Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico & Virgin Islands	\$40/month Europe 7¢–12¢/min.	No adapter needed Most of Maine

Note: FCC has required full service retail VOIP providers to comply with E-911. Some services listed here are not required to provide E-911.

## How to Avoid an Early Termination Penalty

Every year, thousands of wireless service customers are charged between \$150 and \$250 per line to terminate a cell service contract. If you have a three-line family account, that could mean a \$750 penalty! Consumers may need to terminate early because of changed circumstances, financial difficulties, unacceptable service quality, or to take advantage of a plan from a competing carrier. Here are two strategies for avoiding early termination penalties.

**1. AVOID TWO-YEAR CONTRACTS** While wireless phone companies may tell you that a two-year contract is required, you are free to negotiate for a one-year contract. Just be prepared to walk away and choose a competitor if an agent refuses to give you a one-year contract with all the advertised benefits.

**2. YOU CAN SELL YOUR REMAINING CONTRACT** At least three websites are available to bring together those wishing to sell the remainder of their service contract and those wishing to buy a partially completed service contract. As long as the wireless company approves the customer substitution (which they generally do subject to a credit check), there should be little risk involved. Fees to the seller are from \$10–20. There are no fees to the buyer. See: [resellular.com](http://resellular.com), [celltradeusa.com](http://celltradeusa.com) and [cellswapper.com](http://cellswapper.com).

## Free the Cell Phone!

### WHY ARE CELL PHONES LOCKED TO ONE SERVICE PROVIDER?

Consumers of wireless services are frequently surprised, and often annoyed, when they are told that they need to buy a new phone when they change service plans. That annoyance is justified — it's a waste to abandon a perfectly good phone and it can be time consuming to re-program contacts into a new one. This makes it more costly to move to another company's plan and it prevents the customer from buying any related services from another company. Increasingly, consumer advocates are questioning why wireless carriers should be allowed to use their power to limit the competitive options of their customers.

Some customers are not so bothered because, after all, a free or low-cost new phone is usually included with a new plan. However, that new phone is the very reason that the companies generally require one or two-year service contracts. In addition, the cost of all those new phones is a significant factor increasing the prices charged for monthly wireless service.

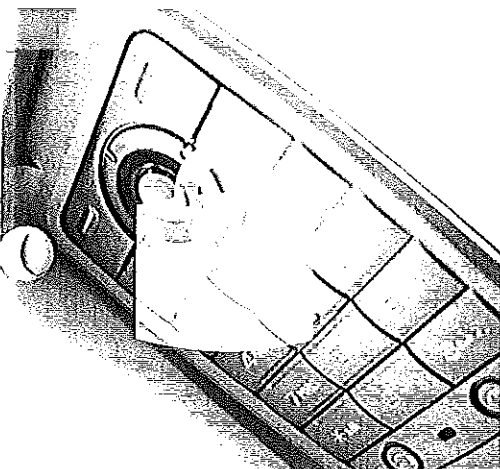
**WILL CELL PHONES EVER BE SET FREE?** Yes, the tide is turning. Recently, big phone manufacturers like Nokia and Motorola have begun to market unlocked phones. However, those phones are more expensive because they are not subsidized by service-plan revenues. And while you can jump from carrier to carrier with an unlocked phone, the new service provider may not be prepared to give you a discount from their usual plan rates, which are generally designed to include the cost of phone giveaways.

Prepaid cell phone customers may have more reason to celebrate. Recently, the U.S. Copyright Office ruled that phones may lawfully be unlocked by their owners using techniques known to experts and hackers. Tracfone, among other companies, is disturbed by this development, because their business is based on selling prepaid phones way below cost in the expectation that they will make money on the minutes they sell. For example, you can buy a \$20 Tracfone (available at many local stores in Maine), which costs, perhaps, \$60 to produce — causing a \$40 loss to the Company if you don't buy their minutes. Others have urged the FCC to require carriers to unlock phones.

Even unlocked phones can only work with a carrier using a compatible transmission mode. A service provider in Maine may be using GSM, TDMA or CDMA (analog is being phased out). If you have a tri-mode phone, it may work with all three, but most phones are compatible with only one or two modes. GSM is the standard used in Europe (and most of the world except China) where, unlike the U.S., phones are generally unlocked.

### Beware of Secret Contract Extensions

Pay very close attention any time that you talk to your wireless provider about your current service plan. You may get something you wanted, but you may have also just extended your contract! For example, if you ask them to replace or repair your phone, or if you request a small change to your service plan, they may record that as your agreement to a new two-year contract. To avoid this, make it clear that you are not agreeing to extend your contract, and, if possible, get that in writing.



# monthly fee wireless plans

	AT&T (CINGULAR) CINGULAR.COM (888-333-7055)		T MOBILE TMOBILE.COM (800-866-2453)		US CELLULAR USCELLULAR.COM (888-944-9400)			UNICEL UNICEL.COM (800-336-4455)—LOCAL (800-462-3558)—NATIONAL			VERIZON VERIZON.COM (800-256-4646)	
Monthly Fee	\$40	\$60 (2 lines)	\$40	\$60	\$40	\$70 (2 lines)	\$40	\$40	\$70 (2 lines)	\$40	\$40	\$70 (2 lines)
Anytime Minutes	450*	550*	600	700	700	1000	450	800	1800	600	450	700
Offpeak Minutes	5000	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	\$6 Unlimited	Unlimited	\$8 Unlimited	1000	1000	500	Unlimited	
Cost per extra min.	45¢		40¢	40¢		49¢		30¢	35¢	30¢	45¢	45¢
Cost of extra lines	N/A	\$10	N/A	\$10	N/A	\$10	N/A	\$20	\$9	\$20	NA	\$10
Roaming Rate	0		0	0	69¢		0	40¢		0	0	
From Canada	79¢		49¢		69¢*			50¢			69¢	
To Canada	19¢		20¢		19¢			30¢			49¢	
Home Area	U.S.		U.S.	U.S.	ME, NH, (excluding Portsmouth) VT and parts of 22 other states in south, mid- west and west		U.S.	Most of ME, MA, NH, VT, and NY		U.S.	US	
Type of Network	GSM/TDMA		GSM		CDMA			GSM			CDMA	
Notes	Rollover applies—minutes rollover for up to 1 yr. Extra \$1.25 "regulatory fee" applies to all plans. *Plus unlimited mobile to mobile minutes between Cingular users in calling area.		1000 minutes for \$40/mo with no extra offpeak minutes. "MyFaves" option—unlimited calls to any five numbers for \$10/mo. Family Plan includes free mobile to mobile minutes in area. Regulatory fee of 86¢ per line.		96¢/monthly "regulatory fee." Unlimited mobile to mobile between US Cellular customers in area. Family—45 roaming minutes included. National family plans start at \$70. \$30 plan available with 300 minutes. *New Brunswick or Quebec, other Provinces much higher.			Service contract is optional—price per phone is cheaper with contract. (Our advice: choose no contract.) \$2/mo. for unlimited Unicel to Unicel with local and nationwide plans. Family Plan includes unlimited incoming minutes and Unicel to Unicel minutes.			Unlimited "in-calling" among Verizon Wireless customers. \$60 plan offers 900 minutes.	

**Roaming charge**—applies when calling from outside home area. International roaming may cause additional toll charges and administrative fees.

**Toll rate**—applies only to some local plans when call destination is outside home area. Toll rates apply to international calls.

**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.

**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**—Some 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.

**Grace period**—Right to cancel contract within first 14-30 days.

**Note**—Your wireless phone may not be usable with other wireless plans when you change service. 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 offers many other plans.

## >> prepaid wireless plans

Initial Cost—Including phone & starting minutes	\$20 to \$200	\$20 to \$90	\$30 to \$400 (includes \$10 card)	\$10 to \$100 (includes 10 minutes)	\$15 to \$110
Home Area	Much of US (spotty in Maine)	Much of US (spotty in Maine)	Much of US	Much of Maine* or Much of US*	Much of US
Airtime Rate Per Minute (US)	25¢	10¢	10¢ to 33¢	20¢ to 34¢	10¢ plus \$10/month
Roaming Charge Per Minute	0	0	0	Double the airtime rate	0
Toll Charge Per Minute	0	0	0	0	0
Minimum Recharge Dollars	\$15	\$15	\$10	\$20	\$20
Expiration of Minutes (days) (varies by refill amount chosen)	30–365	30–365	30–365	45–365	30–90

### SAMPLE ANNUAL COST (DOES NOT INCLUDE COST OF INITIAL PACKAGE OR ROAMING CALLS)

#### 10 minutes/month

Cost	\$100	\$150	\$100	\$80	\$360
Minutes purchased	400	1500	1000	240	2400
Type of refill	1 x 365 days	1 x 365 days	1 x 365 days	4 x 90 days	4 x 90 days

#### 50 minutes/month

Cost	\$150	\$150	\$100	\$150	\$360
Minutes purchased	600	1500	1000	630	2400
Type of refill	6 x 90 days	1 x 365 days	1 x 365 days	1 x 365, 1 x 90, 1 x 30 days	4 x 90 days

#### 100 minutes/month

Cost	\$300	\$150	\$150	\$240	\$360
Minutes purchased	1200	1500	1400	1200	2400
Type of refill	2 x 365 days	1 x 365 days	1 x 365 and 1 x 90	6 x 90 days	4 x 90 days

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

With unlimited mobile-to-mobile 10¢ plan, a charge of \$1.00 per day applies when there is any incoming or outgoing use. 10¢ plan allows unlimited mobile to mobile (Cingular to Cingular)  
15¢ per minute + airtime to Canada  
Canada roaming 79¢  
Minutes roll over

Minutes roll over  
You will not be able to make or receive calls from any location outside of the US, Puerto Rico or US Virgin Islands

\$100 refill gets 15% more minutes and 365 days expiration on further refills  
Canada roaming 49¢ 40¢/min. + airtime for calls to Canada

Depending on number and duration of minutes purchased  
Roaming coverage in much of US  
\*Home area depends on selected phone  
No extra charge for calls to Canada and 60 other int'l destinations — call 800 706-3839 to activate

Canada roaming 50¢ 15 cents/min. to Canada





## don't throw away that orphaned cell phone

If you've switched plans, terminated a service plan, or run out of minutes on your prepaid cell phone, that old phone can still be useful. Cell phones without active plans or a telephone number remain capable of reaching 911 emergency service. So keep that old phone in your car or give it to someone who needs one. Of course, the battery must be charged and wireless coverage must be present in order to reach 911. Be aware that emergency providers cannot call you back if you have no active service.

# The

## Internet Service Update

The U.S. ranks very low among developed nations with respect to broadband availability, speeds, and prices. We're not even in the top 20! And in Maine, we're not even keeping up with many other states. Many Maine residents are still unable to affordably, or even physically, access DSL or Cable Internet service. The ConnectME Authority is just getting underway — it is charged with the task of developing incentive programs to encourage broadband and wireless services in Maine's rural areas. Let's hope for effective and quick action. Here are some of the best choices available now and one for the future:

**DIALUP** Our top pick for dial-up is 207me.com, a local full-featured service, including free accelerator technology and statewide toll-free access, for just \$7 per month.

**DSL** The lowest prices for DSL are from Verizon, starting at \$15/month (for those in Verizon territory). Customers who do not want Verizon's local phone service may purchase standalone DSL starting at \$25/

month. GWI offers a high-quality competitive DSL alternative in many locations. GWI's DSL, at 3 Mbps is four times faster than Verizon's entry-level 768 Kbps product. Maine's 22 independent telephone companies are usually the only DSL option in their telephone exchanges, although they may market DSL jointly with local ISPs. They have done a good job making DSL accessible but prices are often much higher than those of Verizon.

**CABLE** Since Time Warner has acquired Adelphia, its RoadRunner service enjoys a very large share of Maine's cable-modem market. Time Warner will also be expanding its companion Digital Phone service in the former Adelphia territory. Cable-modem prices have remained stable but high — around \$45.

**WIRELESS** Wireless radio broadband Internet service remains costly where available in a few areas of the state. Cell phone mobile broadband services (GPRS) such as Edge and EvDO, are expanding and becoming more widely available

throughout Maine, although they offer low-end broadband speeds.

**SATELLITE** Starband and Wildblue are both now offering satellite broadband service at \$50/month plus a \$300 investment in equipment. The best thing about satellite broadband is that anyone with a clear view of the southern sky can have it. Wildblue may not be accepting new customers before the summer, when their new satellite is ready.

### FREE BROADBAND FOR EVERYONE?

The FCC has received proposals, including one from M2Z Networks — m2znetworks.com — that promises to provide free broadband, based on WiMax (wireless) technology, to 95% of people in the U.S. within 10 years. So what's the catch? M2Z needs the FCC to grant it some unused radio spectrum and then it plans to recover the costs of the free service from advertising revenues (much like Google). The Public Advocate supports this proposal.


# Speed Matters

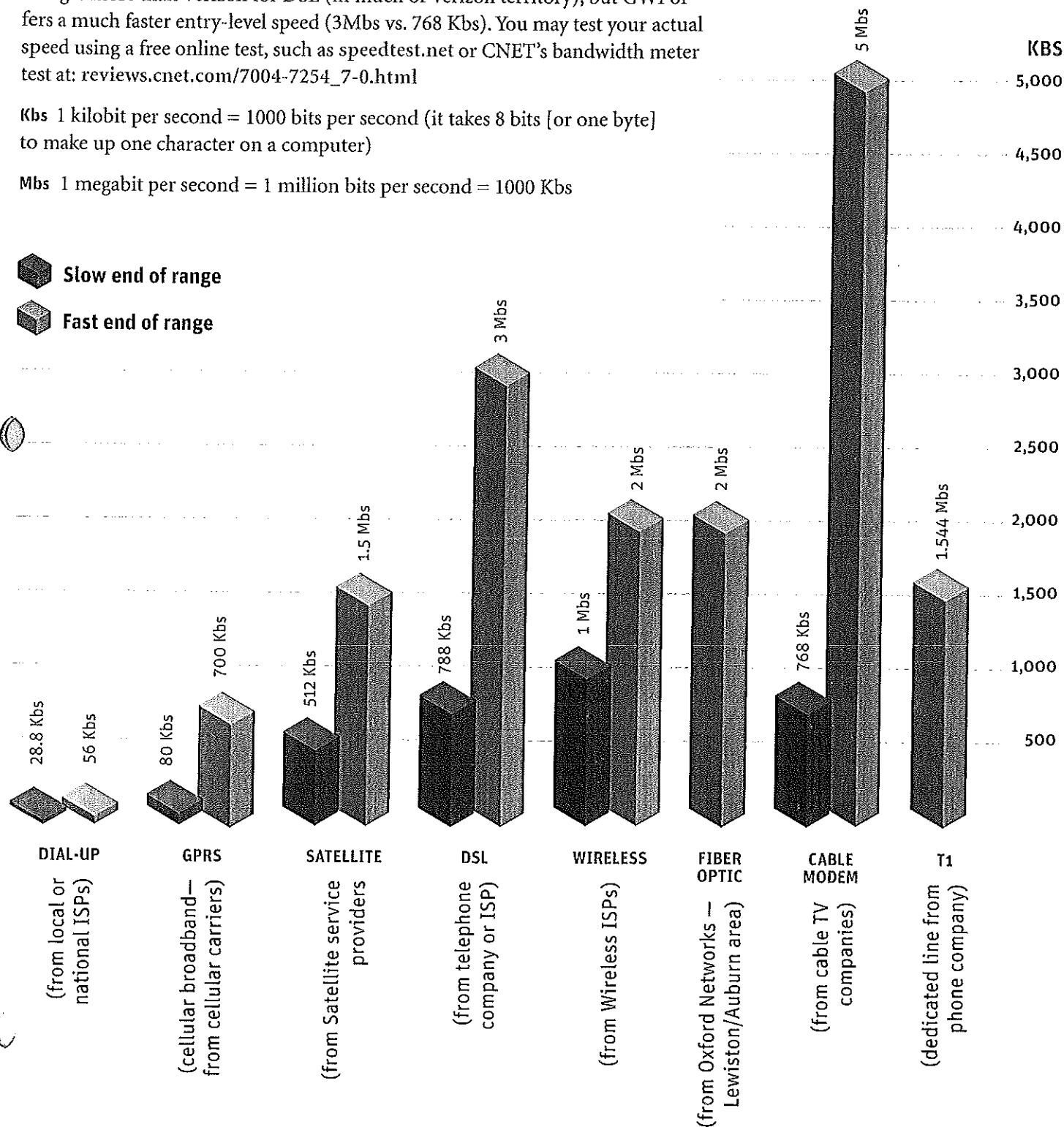
You'll need speed when you play videos, download large files, or use a voice over Internet service. The following chart shows the general range of speeds from the various types of Internet services. Some services are more variable than others – for example, cable-modem connection speeds may vary substantially depending on the number people in your neighborhood who are using the service simultaneously. On the other hand, DSL speeds are fairly constant, but DSL speeds depend on the bandwidth allocated by the provider. For example, GWI charges more than Verizon for DSL (in much of Verizon territory), but GWI offers a much faster entry-level speed (3Mbps vs. 768 Kbs). You may test your actual speed using a free online test, such as [speedtest.net](http://speedtest.net) or CNET's bandwidth meter test at: [reviews.cnet.com/7004-7254\\_7-0.html](http://reviews.cnet.com/7004-7254_7-0.html)

Kbs 1 kilobit per second = 1000 bits per second (it takes 8 bits [or one byte] to make up one character on a computer)

Mbs 1 megabit per second = 1 million bits per second = 1000 Kbs

 Slow end of range

 Fast end of range



## TYPICAL RESIDENTIAL INTERNET SPEEDS

(within service types, speeds may vary by chosen service plan and by local conditions)



# >> internet service providers

COMPANY	FEATURES	PRICES
STATEWIDE TOLL FREE-DIAL-UP		
207ME Maine Dialup   888-229-2411   207me.com	4 email addresses with 50 Mb mailbox space   free 6x accelerator	(res) \$6.95/mo.   (bus) \$9.95/mo.   No setup fee
Aroostook Internet   800-752-4330   ainop.com	4 email addresses with 5 Mb space	\$19/mo.   No setup fee
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
GW I   866-494-2020   gwi.net	2 email addresses with 40 Mb space	\$9@10 hrs. / \$16@40 hrs.   \$20 to \$24/mo. unlimited   \$15 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 10 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
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

COMPANY	FEATURES	PRICES
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**NATIONAL ISPs (DIAL-UP) check for an access # in your local toll free calling areas**

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	\$10/mo. @ 10 hrs.   \$26/mo. unlimited
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.
CORECOMM   877-267-3266   core.com	10 email addresses with 25 Mb space	\$10/mo   \$13/mo. with accelerator   no setup fee
Earthlink   800-327-8454   earthlink.net	8 email addresses with 10 Mb space per email address	\$14 to \$22/mo.   \$25 setup fee
Juno/Netzero   888-349-0029   netzero.net   junos.com	Email on the web with 2 Gb storage space	FREE @ 10/hrs. mo.   \$10/mo. unlimited   \$15/mo. with accelerator
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.   \$16/mo. with accelerator
USAdatanet   800-290-2655   usadatanet.net	Unlimited email addresses	\$10/mo.   \$15/mo. with accelerator

**WIRELESS HIGH SPEED INTERNET**

Airolink Wireless   207-680-5465   airolink.net	Parts of Kennebec and Somerset Counties	5 email addresses with 50 Mb space	\$40/mo. Res. Bus. starting at \$50/mo. \$25 Equipment cost
Aroostook Internet   800-752-4330   ainop.com	Available in Houlton, St. Agatha area	4 email addresses with 5 Mb space	\$40/mo. Res. & Bus. \$125 Equipment cost
Downeast Wireless   207-667-7414   downeast.net	Available in Ellsworth and Blue Hill area	4 email addresses with 5 Mb space	\$50/mo. \$250 Equipment cost
Midcoast Internet   207-594-8277   midcoast.com	Various locations in the mid-coast area	4 email addresses with 20 Mb space	\$50/mo. \$100 to \$200 Equipment cost
Pioneer Wireless   866-335-1254   pwless.net	Northern Maine—Medway to Fort Kent (Calais was recently added)	5 email addresses with 10 Mb space	Res. \$40/mo. Bus. \$50/mo. \$99–\$199 Equipment cost
SJV Wireless, Inc.   877-475-8638   sjv.net	Fort Kent, Wallagrass, some areas of St. John	1 email with 3 Mb space	Res. \$35/mo. Bus. \$50/mo. \$99 Res. Equipment cost \$199 Bus. Equipment cost

**DSL HIGH SPEED INTERNET**

(Local Independent Phone Companies )	Throughout local territories	Call local phone company for details	Res. (\$30/mo.–\$60/mo.) Call company for rates
Aroostook Internet   800-752-4330   ainop.com	Presque Isle, Caribou, and Houlton areas	4 email addresses with 5 Mb space	Res. \$35/mo. Bus. \$70/mo.
GWI   866-494-2020   gwi.net	Available in 40 exchanges within Verizon's territory	5 email addresses with 40 Mb space	Res. \$35/mo. Bus. \$50/mo. No setup fee

COMPANY	FEATURES	PRICES
Midcoast Internet   207-594-8277   midcoast.com	Available throughout Maine in selected exchanges	4 email addresses with 20 Mb space \$35/mo. Verizon customers \$43/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. \$80/mo. Installation Res. \$55 Bus. 250
Oxford Networks   800-520-9911	Lewiston/Auburn (not all areas yet) and Norway/South Paris	5 email addresses with 10 Mb space Res. \$38/mo. Bus. \$60-\$80/mo.
Pioneer Wireless   866-335-1254   pwless.net	Northern Maine – Fort Kent area	5 email addresses with 10 Mb space \$35/mo.
Pivot.Net   800-400-5568   pivot.net	Available in selected exchanges	7 email addresses with 25 Mb space \$35/mo.
Verizon   877-483-5898   verizon.com	Available in much of Verizon territory	9 email addresses with 10 Mb space Res. starting at \$15/mo. Bus. \$60/mo.
<b>CABLE MODEM HIGH SPEED INTERNET</b>		
Aroostook Internet   800-752-4330   ainop.com	Houlton area	4 email addresses with 5 Mb space \$25-\$35 depending on speed
Bee Line Cable   800-439-4611	Skowhegan, Wilton, Madison, Industry, Anson, Farmington	5 email addresses with 10 Mb space Res. \$30/mo. Bus. \$35/mo.
Comcast   800-266-2278   comcast.com	Berwick, So. Berwick, Eliot & Kittery, Brunswick & Freeport areas	Res.—7 email addresses w/ 10 Mb space Bus.—10 email addresses w/ 10 Mb space Res. \$24-\$53 /mo. \$30 installation fee Bus. \$52 /mo. \$50 installation fee
Metrocast Online   800-695-2545   metrocast.com	Acton, Lebanon, Sanford, Shapleigh, Springvale	2 email addresses with 40 Mb space \$33/mo.
Pine Tree Cablevision   800-220-3320   ptc-me.net	Machias area	3 email addresses with 10 Mb space \$21 to \$50/mo., depending on selected speed +\$3/mo. modem rental
Time Warner Cable   800-833-2253   twcable.com	Most of Maine	8 email addresses with 10 Mb space \$45/mo. No installation fee
<b>SATELLITE HIGH SPEED INTERNET</b>		
HughesNet (formerly Direcway)   888-667-5537 hughesnet.com	Available statewide (Generally requires clear view of so. sky)	5 email addresses with 10 Mb space \$60/mo. + \$400 equipment cost \$100 installation cost
Skycasters 800-853-0434 skycasters.com	Available statewide (Generally requires clear view of so. sky)	2 email accounts \$100/mo. + \$600 equipment \$300 installation cost
Starband   800-478-2722   starband.com	Available statewide (Generally requires clear view of so. sky)	10 email addresses with 10 Mb space \$50/mo. \$300 equipment cost
WildBlue   866-945-3258   wildblue.com TEMPORARILY UNAVAILABLE; EXPECTED AVAILABILITY JULY 2007	Available statewide (Generally requires clear view of so. sky)	5 email addresses \$50/mo. +\$300 equipment Free installation

## Are Satellite Service Prices Coming Down to Earth?

OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD BROADBAND AND TELEPHONE ALTERNATIVES FOR RURAL AREAS

In Maine and most other states, there are far too many customers who remain beyond the reach of modern telecom services, such as high-speed Internet service and quality wireless coverage. Satellite technology is the one type of service that does not discriminate against rural communities — it has the potential to reach any place on the globe. In addition to military and scientific uses, satellites have, for years, been providing consumers with free Global Positioning Service and subscription TV service. However, relatively few consumers are familiar with satellite telephone and Internet services. Perhaps that is because the prices are high and service can be substandard, given the signal delay that affects two-way satellite services.

**SATELLITE TELEPHONE** Need to make an important call from the Allagash? Check out GlobalStar, which provides satellite phones and service. The phone itself will set you back somewhere between \$400 and \$1000 and each minute of calling will cost between 30¢ and \$1.49, depending on the chosen plan (higher volume = lower rate). See [globalcomsatphone.com](http://globalcomsatphone.com)

**SATELLITE INTERNET** Satellite broadband service has a reputation for high prices and sub-par quality, but, like other satellite services, it could be the best thing available in a rural area. Starband just reduced its rates substantially and now matches those of Wildblue. Both offer high-speed Internet connectivity at a cost of \$300 for equipment and \$50/month for service at 512 Kbs (a relatively low broadband speed). Wildblue is expected to begin accepting new customers early this summer — they ran out of capacity and are finishing work on a new satellite. Starband should be available now. See page 18.

## IF YOU USE DIAL-UP, MAKE THE BEST OF IT AND SAVE

If you can't get high-speed Internet service, or can't afford it, there's a new high-quality, money-saving option. 207 Maine dialup — [www.207me.com](http://www.207me.com) — offers toll-free access from any location in Maine, free 6X accelerator to maximize the speed of your dial-up connection, responsive local customer service, and a surprisingly low price of \$6.95/month. Why pay \$20 for the same service? (see dial-up listings on page 16).

## Steve Ward Retires After 21 Years As Maine's Public Advocate Now, Richard Davies Steps Into the Position

Steve Ward's service to Maine's consumers has been extraordinary. Having been appointed by Governor Brennan and then retained by Governors McKernan, King, and Baldacci, Steve's knowledge and commitment transcended partisan politics. Steve's performance here was characterized by a detailed knowledge of complex subjects, unquestioned integrity, zealous representation of Maine's consumers, and his true desire to serve the people of Maine. Under his leadership, the Public Advocate has saved Maine's consumers many millions of dollars and helped to ensure a high quality of utility services in Maine. We will miss Steve.

Although he may have big shoes to fill, Richard Davies comes to the job with substantial knowledge of public utility issues. Dick chaired the legislative Committee on Public Utilities and the Committee on Energy during his four terms in the Maine House of Representatives, between 1974 and 1982. After a series of other positions, Dick's most recent post before his appointment as Public Advocate was senior policy advisor to Governor Baldacci. Dick strongly supports the Ratewatcher and hopes to bring it to more people in Maine.



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



Standing (left to right): Dick, Charlie, Eric, Ratty, Bill  
Seated (left to right): Mary, Debbie, Wayne

The Public Advocate and his staff are committed to public service in representing Maine utility consumers. We work to ensure that they have affordable, high quality utility services and we provide unbiased information to help consumers make the best choices. We who work at the Public Advocate's Office seek to carry out this representation in a principled, diligent and compassionate manner.

Maine consumers are welcome to call our office with questions. Our staff members can also be made available to speak to groups interested in utility issues or to those interested in advice on shopping for telecommunication services.



## HAVE QUESTIONS

ABOUT TELEPHONE,  
WIRELESS OR INTERNET  
SERVICES? LOOKING  
FOR MONEY-SAVING  
SUGGESTIONS?

Mark your calendar  
and come meet the  
Public Advocate  
staff.

### WHEN

May 16, 2007  
10:00 am to 4:00  
pm

### WHERE

Auburn Mall, Auburn, Maine

Feel free to bring your  
current bills for review.