



Opinion

Should telephone users pay all kinds of charges?

Regulators who are supposed to protect consumers from unfair treatment at the hands of telecommunications companies seem to be not watchdogs, but in fact, running with the wolf pack.

Don't believe it? Take a good look at your next cellular or landline telephone bill.

On a typical landline bill in Kansas, for instance, you'll find that as much as a quarter of the entire bill goes not to pay for your phone service, but to pay taxes and special fees which may or may not benefit the guy who uses the line.

The lion's share of this money, about \$5.30 per line, goes to something called the "Federal Subscriber Line Charge," which is not a tax, but a charge paid directly to the telephone service provider, AT&T in this case. This fee is not regulated by the states, as are basic charges, but the Federal Communications Commission caps it at \$6.50 per line.

While it may look official, it's just a way for the phone company to inflate the bill to pay for "costs." It's a scam, in other words, and some consumer web sites report the companies will sometimes waive the charge when someone complains enough.

Next-biggest fee on the list is the Kansas Universal Service Fee, about \$4 a line, which is supposed to help pay for better service in "rural" areas. A Federal Universal Service Fee is similar, but less than half as much, \$1.75 per line. These are established by state and federal law.

We've never figured out what actual good these fees do those of us out here, who live in rural territory and might be happier with lower phone bills. One multi-million-dollar project which got a federal loan involves a cooperative telephone company building a new phone system in Hays and other area towns, places that already have good phone and Internet service.

Competition is good, yes, but should users of an existing phone service be taxed to pay for it? Couldn't the phone companies just get a bank loan?

We say Congress and the states should eliminate these charges.

Then there is the Special E911 Tax, a state levy which collects money used to "modernize" county and city dispatch operations. While these are vital, we wonder if the tax isn't a little high at 75 cents per line. When legislators ques-

tioned this, and tried to reduce the fee last year during debate on reauthorizing the tax, county commissioners screamed bloody murder.

There was no one there to represent telephone users, however, and guess which side won?

If you live in town, you may pay a "Special Municipal Charge," basically a city tax or franchise fee. This comes to 75 cents a line on our bill, but cities have taxed phone bills for years.

"Ordinary" taxes, state and federal, amount to roughly \$3.60, and the \$10 in "Surcharges and Other Fees" makes that seem cheap.

In some ways, your cellular bill is worse. The surcharges are lower, but cellular companies charge made-up fees that pad their bills beyond the monthly charges they advertise.

Our carrier assesses a "regulatory cost recovery fee" and a "telecom connectivity fees," totaling \$1.15 per line. If you read the fine print, these supposedly represent real costs of doing business, but "(these) are not a government mandated tax or surcharge."

In other words, they're just part of what you pay to use your cell phone each month. They mean a \$10 add-on line really costs \$11.15 plus taxes and required fees. And that amounts to deceptive advertising.

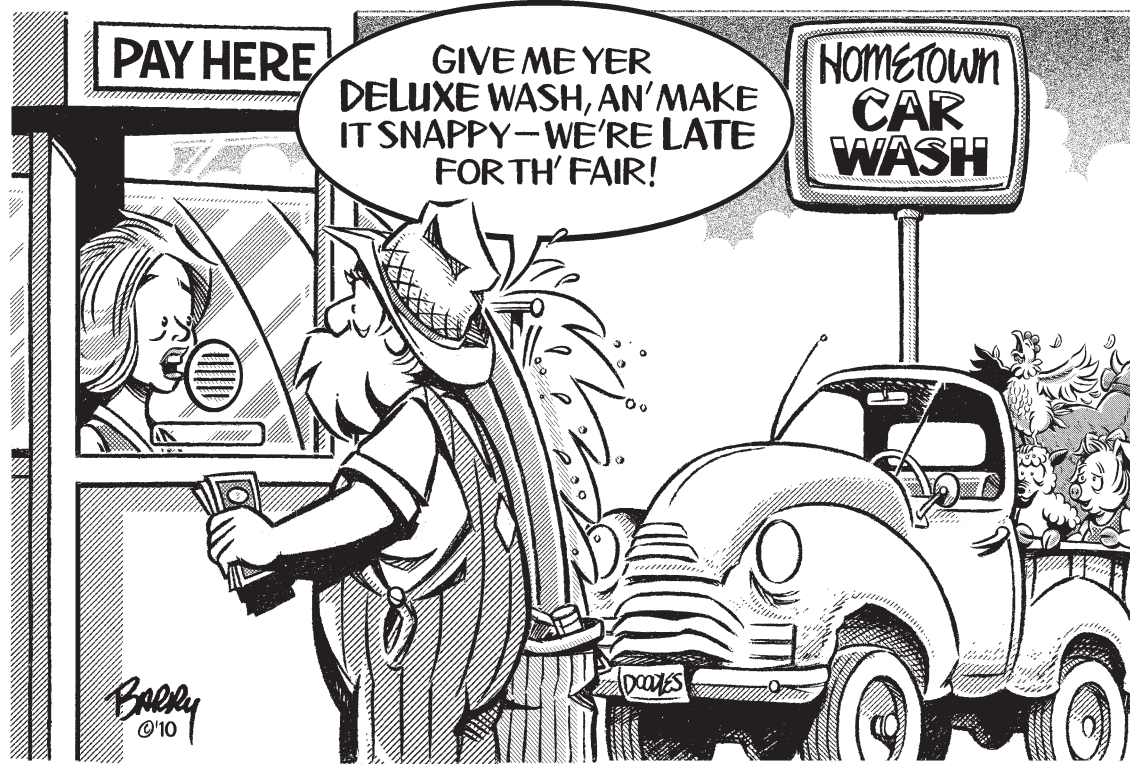
Otherwise, cell users pay lower fees than land lines - the 911 tax is only 50 cents per line though cell phones make most of the 911 calls today, and state and local taxes run about 8 percent. Universal service charges are 4 to 5 percent for the state and the federal funds, again with no perceived real benefit to rural cell phone users.

What to do? Demand that your legislators reduce the 911 tax, for starters. Pressure Congress and the state to eliminate the "rural service" fees or show that they're really doing something for us. Same for the "subscriber line charge."

And write the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Trade Commission and ask that all phone companies be required to advertise, in big type, the real price, with and without taxes, of their service. And make them add the phony surcharges into the advertised price.

Phone service would be a lot cheaper - at least easier to understand - if, instead of going along, government put a stop to this folderol. Consumers deserve as much.

- Steve Haynes



News From the Past

5 years ago - 2005

"Proud To Be An American" is the theme for this year's Cheyenne County Fair Parade.

Jenice Hartman was named Miss Kansas Junior Teen Queen in competition held in Overland Park.

Samantha Zweygardt and Margo Douthit represented Cheyenne County Farm Bureau at the Kansas Farm Bureau Leadership America in Great Bend.

St. Francis resident Eldon Zimbelman is one of three officials recognized by the National Federation High School on July 1 at the summer meeting held in San Antonio. He received the federation's Citation Award because of his contribution and impact made on high school sports. This spring, Mr. Zimbelman retired after being an active wrestling official for 43 years. He refereed at 39 state tournaments and two grand-state tournaments.

By the end of October, the auditorium at the St Francis Community High School will have a new look and feel, thanks to the memorial money left to the school by Ray and Vergie Rogers. At the Thursday meeting of the board of education, they approved the seats for the auditorium. A new air conditioning and heating unit is also being

installed this summer.

After 35 years, Marv Zweygardt is retiring as a livestock brand inspector.

Members of the high school junior class organized a 34-family garage sale to earn money for their after-prom party.

The St. Francis cheerleaders came home from the UCA Cheer Camp in Ainsworth, Neb., with four trophies. Attending camp were Talisa Voorhies, Sawyer White, Cassie Dankenbring, Jade DeGood, Mindy Cooper and Dara Loyd.

Thanks to a generous offer from John and Elaine Kite, the Cheyenne County Development Corporation Office is moving to 107 W. Washington in July. The building was formerly Kite Realty Building.

35 years ago - 1975

R.G. "Rudy" Rueb has been in the repair business in St. Francis for 53 years. He started out in 1922 repairing automobiles and tractors, then in 1924, he sold cars under contract to a company from Nebraska, and later he sold implements under contract. He got out of the car and implement business full-time in 1966, but since then he has worked part-time as a parts man for Lampe Implement. Now 53 years later he still has a hand in the repair shop business.

Cindy Curry, St. Francis, will

be among some 317 exhibitors from 28 states showing Polled Hereford heifers at the second National Junior Polled Hereford Show and Forum at Omaha, Neb.

The theme of the 1975 Cheyenne County Fair parade is "Once Upon A Time." The parade will be held on Saturday, Aug. 9.

Grace and Adolph Weber of Denver have leased the Highway 36 Cafe from Don and Gladys Abel.

Mrs. Andrew (Flossie) Byerly recently resigned her position as the executive director and manager of Cheyenne Manor. Mrs. Richard Davison has been appointed by the St. Francis Housing Authority Board as the replacement for Mrs. Byerly.

A long "trail ride" of 33 years came to an end June 30 when Bud Carpenter retired as a businessman in St. Francis. First the long-standing produce business came to an end. Next, the feed and seed sales operation, which had been added on to the produce business, was no longer and finally, the saddle and tack shop changed ownership and moved to a new location.



Casey's Comments

By Casey McCormick



scmccormick@nwkansans.com

Last Saturday I enjoyed my yearly duty as lot attendant for the Thresher Show in Bird City.

It's a very important job, you know. Although it is a voluntary position, the role of security guard in charge of the flagged barrier cable to the worker's parking area carries a huge amount of authority and responsibility.

Honor Roll

New and renewed Herald subscriptions: Amelia Zuege, St. Francis; Ron Wieck, St. Francis; Lyle Rath, Stover, Mo.; Jeff Landers, St. Francis; Jane Perkins, Park City; Leone Freemeyer, Greeley; Melvin Wieck, Arvada, Colo.; Jean Brenner, Burlington, Colo.; Dennis Brenner, Colorado Springs, Colo.; Vickie Dorsch, Salina; R.W. Stuart, Hays; Keith Bracelin, Goodland; Howard Peters, Omaha, Neb.; Jack Lampe, St. Francis; Pearlina Rath, St. Francis; Pete Kinen, St. Francis; Bird City Library, Bird City; Carol Whipple, Mesa, Ariz.;

Alright, so I sit in a folding chair and eat dust from Tom Sawyer's road for a few hours. But it is fun to visit with great folks coming to a special event. By the way, thanks to the good samaritans for the coffee, donut and limeade.

More importantly, this time allows me an opportunity to give back to a community that has given me so much. This also helps insure that the Thresher Show can keep going.

Without volunteers another big spectacle would not be possible: the Cheyenne County Fair.

My hat is tipped to all the peo-

ple who have already given to the fair, and to those who are signed up.

But if you haven't, there is still time. It doesn't take any special skill to operate a game or to help out. Grab a friend or family member and give them a call. It will make this year's fair more memorable for yourself and the others attending.

Call DeEtta Knorr at 785-332-2551 or 785-332-4073 to offer your help.

- Steve Haynes

GOD SAYS

Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another.

Leviticus 19:11

Couple enjoys time in St. Francis

Dear Editor,

We had a very enjoyable time in St. Francis earlier this month. All the merchants downtown were helpful, friendly and eager to talk to visitors.

We stopped in the Cheyenne County Historical Museum and appreciated the great information from the couple working

Letters to the Editor

There. We loved the way the town looked; obviously, people in St. Francis take a lot of pride in their community.

The woman at Cornerstone Real Estate helped us contact a merchant and left us with them

saying, "Enjoy us!" We certainly did. Thanks for making us feel so welcome.

John and Charlene Van Walleghen Wichita

The Saint Francis Herald
(USPS 475-960)
A Century of Service to Cheyenne County

P.O. Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050

Published each Thursday by Haynes Publishing Co., 310 W. Washington, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050. Entered as periodicals matter at the post office at St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050, and at additional offices.

Official newspaper of Cheyenne County. Member of the Kansas Press Association, National Newspaper Association, Colorado Press Association and Inland Press Association.

Subscriptions: One year \$38 (tax included) in Cheyenne and adjacent counties; \$42 (tax included) elsewhere in Kansas; \$48 elsewhere in the U.S. Foreign subscriptions, \$28 extra per year (except APO/FPO). POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Box 1050, St. Francis, Kan. 67756-1050

Nor'West Newspapers

8:30 a.m. - noon - 1:00-5:00 p.m.
Monday - Friday
(785) 332-3162 Fax - (785) 332-3001
E-mail - sf.herald@nwkansans.com

STAFF

Karen Krien Editor/Publisher
Betty Winston Sports Editor
Casey McCormick Advertising Manager
Lezlie McCormick Production
Peggy Horinek Office Manager
Margaret Bucholtz Columnist

Praise the Lord

<p>Church of Christ 332-2380, Pars. 332-3424 502 W. Spencer Norman Morrow - Minister Bible Class 11 a.m. Morning Worship 10 a.m. Wed. Bible Study 7 p.m.</p>	<p>St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church 625 S. River • 332-2680 Fr. Roger Meitl Sunday Mass 10 a.m. Weekday Mass 8:30 a.m. Confessions Sat. 4-4:30</p>	<p>First Baptist Church 2nd & Scott • 332-3921 J.W. Glidewell, Pastor Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m. Sunday Evening Service 6:30 p.m., Wed. AWANA Club, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.</p>
<p>United Methodist Church Church Office 332-2292, Church 332-2254, 512 S. Scott Pastor Morita Truman Early Bird Service 8:30 a.m. Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 a.m.</p>	<p>Salem Lutheran Church 332-3002 Pastor Chris Farmer Morning Worship 10:30 a.m. Communion 3rd Sunday</p>	<p>St. Francis Community Church 332-3150 204 N. Quincy Street www.sfccfamily.com Pastor: David Butler Sunday School 9:15 a.m. Worship Service 10:30 a.m. Potluck & Communion - Every 2nd Sunday Wednesday Bible Study 7 p.m.</p>
<p>Seventh-Day Adventist Church 785-890-5718 • 3rd & Adams Pastor Jerry Nowack Sabbath School 9:30 Morning Worship 10:45</p>	<p>Solid Rock Baptist Church 412 S. Denison Welcomes You! Pastor Allen Coon Sunday School 9:30 a.m. Worship 10:30 Prayer Meeting, Wed 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>Peace Lutheran Church, AFLC 202 N. College Pastor Ken Hart 332-2928 Pars. 332-2312 Worship 9:30 a.m. Fellowship Time Following Worship Communion 1st Sunday of the Month</p>

St. Francis
Equity

St. Francis
Herald