



March 23, 2009

An Open Letter to the Georgia Senate: Eliminate Telecom Slush Fund, Reduce Phone Bills!

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the nearly 8,300 Georgia members of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I urge you to support H.B. 168, which would eliminate the superfluous Universal Access Fund. The Fund was created to ease the burden on rural telecom providers with subsidies, but has since evolved into a wasteful slush fund that lavishes taxpayer dollars on questionable and unnecessary spending projects. By supporting H.B. 168 and repealing the Universal Access Fund, you can help relieve your constituents of some of the fees that make up a large part of their telephone bill.

The Universal Access Fund was created to temporarily compensate small phone companies for losses in access revenue. But now, that purpose is no longer being served as it has grown into a wasteful fund financed on the backs of Georgia's telephone customers. Georgians work long and hard to pay their bills, only to see \$20,000 of their money spent on a holiday party, \$15,000 toward a dinner, and even money for repairs on a cabin in North Carolina. A fund so opaque and unaccountable is clearly not in the best interests of the consumers and taxpayers who are struggling to make ends meet.

Further, the Universal Access Fund has been growing at an alarming rate, some 500 percent over the last few years alone. It now amounts to roughly \$15 million in direct costs to consumers. H.B. 168 would provide some much-needed relief to citizens who see roughly half of their monthly phone payment siphoned away by taxes and fees.

Now is the perfect time to abolish the Universal Access Fund. In an economic environment where every dollar counts to taxpayers, unnecessary spending like this is ripe for elimination. Stand up for taxpayers and support H.B. 168.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JC", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Joshua Culling
State Government Affairs Manager

CC: Governor Perdue