



**FROM THE DESK OF
COMMISSIONER
BRENT BAILEY
CENTRAL DISTRICT OFFICE**



The Central District is pleased to bring you the latest information concerning utility rates, project developments, Public Service Commission actions and other news you can use. I hope you will find this information to be a useful resource to learn about the Public Service Commission, consumer issues and the continuous work we are doing for the citizens in the Central District and across the state of Mississippi. Thank you again for allowing me to serve you in this capacity.

Brent Bailey



TELECOMMUNICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

I hope this edition of our weekly newsletter finds you doing well as we enter our first week of shelter-in-place measures as outlined by the Governor’s [Executive Order No. 1466](#). While this Executive Order makes official the shelter-in-place requirements for everyone, Mississippi students have been doing their schoolwork from home since returning from spring break vacation.

The ability to connect to the internet at home and the quality of that connection matters. Yet many Mississippians don’t have access to reliable internet connectivity, or can’t afford it, and will have trouble communicating, working, and doing schoolwork without it. Keeping students safe and connected at home during this challenging time is essential to our society’s well-being. Urgent and effective action is required.

In an effort to help to ensure that our school-aged children have access to the internet, are online and continue to learn during the coronavirus pandemic, the Mississippi Public Service Commission hosted a “Telecommunications for Education Conference Call” on the afternoon of March 31 to explore what telecommunication carriers and companies are doing to lessen the burden on their

customers and other families who are trying to provide school-aged children access to the internet. In addition to the telecommunications companies, nearly 150 representatives of school systems from across Mississippi were on the call. Most schools are providing lessons online and many are also requiring students to submit schoolwork online.

Shortly after the call was opened, I offered the following statement:

“Thank you Commissioner Presley for organizing this call and thank you to the companies for participating this afternoon. The needs of our students are just as diverse as the geographies of the state and as diverse as the potential technological solutions capable of delivering internet connectivity to homes. While we have known that gaps in services exist throughout the state, the events that have led to the closures of our educational facilities have certainly highlighted just how far we need to go to obtain equitable internet access for students. I know we will not solve the issue today, but I do look forward to hearing what companies are doing to reduce the burden of gaining access to the world wide web. Thanks for allowing me to share those remarks and I yield back to the moderator.”



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Additional details and information gleaned from the conference call was captured in a [general information document](#). The companies participating on the call have committed to the Keep Americans Connected Pledge. So far, more than 650 companies and associations have signed the FCC's pledge to Keep Americans Connected. The Keep Americans Connected Pledge reads as follows:

Given the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on American society, [[Company Name]] pledges for the next 60 days to:

1. not terminate service to any residential or small business customers because of their inability to pay their bills due to the disruptions caused by the coronavirus pandemic;
2. waive any late fees that any residential or small business customers incur because of their economic circumstances related to the coronavirus pandemic; and
3. open its Wi-Fi hotspots to any American who needs them.



Below, we have listed links regarding specific information about COVID-19 programs, offerings and allowances, and contact information for each company that participated on the conference call.

MOBILE CARRIERS:

AT&T/Cricket

<https://about.att.com/pages/COVID-19.html>
<https://www.cricketwireless.com/newsroom/blog/cricket-health-and-safety-update.html>
Contact: C.D. Smith, cs7518@att.com

C-Spire

<https://www.cspire.com/cms/wireless/work-from-home-wireless/>
Contact: Terrell Knight, tknight@cspire.com

Sprint

<https://newsroom.sprint.com/covid-19-updates-sprint-responds.htm>
<http://1millionproject.org/>
Contact: Bill Atkinson, Bill.atkinson@sprint.com

T-Mobile

www.t-mobile.com/news
Contact: William Haas, William.Haas@T-Mobile.com

RURAL CARRIERS:

TEC

<https://www.tec.com/>
Contact: Lisa Wigington, LisaW@tec.com

Windstream

<https://news.windstream.com/Windstream-COVID-19-Response/>
Contact: Sarah Hardin, Sarah.Hardin@windstream.com

CABLE:

Comcast

www.comcastcorporation.com/covid19
www.Xfinity.com/wifi
Contact: Pamela Weaver, Pamela_Weaver@comcast.com

MaxxSouth

www.maxxsouth.com
Contact: Rick Ferrall, Richard.ferrall@maxxsouth.com

Sparklight

<http://one2one.sparklight.com/>
Contact: Greg Capranica, Gregory.Capranica@sparklight.biz

SATELLITE COMPANIES:

ViaSat

<https://corpblog.viasat.com/covid-19/>
Contact: Matt Nelsen, Matt.Nelsen@viasat.com

Satellite Broadcasting & Communications Association

www.sbca.org
www.strongerwithsatellite.com
Contact: Steve Hill, schill@sbca.org





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Our office receives calls daily from families who are struggling to maintain or find a reliable internet connection. Some people assume that given the proliferation of smartphones in households, families and students can simply get online via smartphones or cellular hot spots. However, many variables come into play. Remotely taking online classes, studying, and writing has certainly amplified the “homework gap” in many communities. Closing these gaps must be at the center of any solution. Unfortunately, industry and government may have been so obsessed with 5G that they forgot to get regular internet service to rural homes and businesses.



Last week, our Consumer Complaint Specialists handled a total of **31** complaints in the Central District.

Telecommunications 22

Electric Companies 5

Water/Sewage 2

Natural Gas 2

In March, the Central District received a total of **1,035** complaints from consumers against potential telemarketers through our no call app, website and mail-ins.

776 complaints were opened, meaning we are actively pursuing these complaints as a no call violation.

259 complaints were closed due to the numbers being listed as an exemption on the state no call law, an invalid number, spoofed or it was an illegal number outside of the U.S.

109 subpoenas were issued in the month of March to determine who the numbers belong to that were reported in the month of February.

We encourage consumers to file telemarketing complaints with the Federal Trade Commission at <http://www.donotcall.gov/> in addition to filing complaints with the Mississippi Public Service Commission.



The Mississippi Public Service Commission’s upcoming Docket Meeting is scheduled for: **Tuesday, April 14 at 10:00 a.m.**

Additional information and details regarding the setting of the meeting will be listed in the upcoming public notice, which will be posted to our website: www.psc.ms.gov