

# EXHIBIT 2

Comment on video visitation

*New York Times October 2015 editorial*

**PRISON**  
POLICY INITIATIVE

# The New York Times

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2015

THE NEW YORK TIMES **EDITORIALS/LETTERS** MONDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2015

## For Inmates, the Cost of Keeping in Touch

Families that have been forced to choose between buying household essentials and sharing a phone call with a loved one behind bars have long pleaded with the federal government to end price-gouging by the companies that provide phone service for jail and prison inmates.

The Federal Communications Commission took a preliminary step toward that end two years ago when it limited what those companies could charge for interstate telephone calls. On Thursday, the commission went one step further when it set limits on what the companies can charge on all inmate calls. There's one big task left: to apply similar rules to newer technologies — like email, voice mail and person-to-person video — which are subject to the same kinds of abuses found in the telephone industry.

There's little doubt that inmates who keep in touch with their families have a better chance of finding places in their communities and staying out of jail once they are released. But before the F.C.C. intervened, a call from behind prison walls could sometimes cost as much as \$14 per minute. Thursday's order sets a cap of 11 cents per minute for all local and long-distance calls from state and federal prisons. This means an average (and much more affordable) rate of no more than \$1.65 per 15 minutes for a vast majority of intrastate and interstate calls.

Prisoners' families, who pay for these calls, are among the poorest in the country. The new system will al-

low them to keep in touch without going broke. But the F.C.C. ruling does not get to a fundamental problem: Inmate telephone costs are partly driven by a "commission" — essentially a legal kickback — that phone companies pay corrections departments. The commissions are calculated as a percentage of revenue, or a fixed upfront fee, or a combination of both.

Several members of Congress recently sent a letter to the F.C.C. urging it to ban the commissions. It is unclear whether this is within the agency's power, which means congressional action might be needed. But the members were right when they said that the exploitation of inmates is clearly a human rights issue.

The F.C.C. is now seeking public comment on whether similar caps should be placed on new technologies. These include for-profit video systems like those that allow families and inmates to communicate using personal computers outside the prison and video terminals inside the prison. The answer should be yes.

A report this year by the Prison Policy Initiative, a Massachusetts research and advocacy group, found that jails and private companies were conspiring to shut down traditional face-to-face visits in order to force families to use the computers. This is the same kind of perverse incentive that led to price gouging in traditional telephone services.