



*Case No. GNR-T-18-03*

*Order No. 34020*

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## **IPUC waives ITSAP surcharge for 2<sup>nd</sup> straight year**

**BOISE (April 25, 2018)** – State regulators have suspended a surcharge that helps qualified Idahoans afford basic telephone service for the second consecutive year as the number of recipients and contributors continues to decline.

The Idaho Telecommunications Service Assistance Program (ITSAP) provides a monthly discount of \$2.50 to qualified applicants, for landline and cell phone service.

The program is funded through a small surcharge on all phone lines - business, residential and wireless. The Idaho Public Utilities Commission determines the surcharge and the state Department of Health and Welfare administers the program.

As the number of Idahoans receiving financial assistance from ITSAP has declined, so has the amount of the surcharge, from 13 cents per month for each line in 1998, to 7 cents in 2013, and 3 cents in 2014.

In May 2017, the Commission suspended the surcharge for the 2017 budget year after the number of ITSAP recipients dropped 42 percent from the previous year.

The trend continued over the past year as the number of ITSAP recipients dropped by 34 percent.

There was also a decline in the number of land lines in 2017 - 21 percent from the previous year - and a 45-percent drop in the number of wireless phone lines.

The ITSAP administrator said the number of wireless lines reported for 2017 is likely not accurate, however, because some companies did not provide counts due to the suspension of the surcharge.

As a result, the Commission's order suspending the surcharge for the 2018 budget year calls for the ITSAP administrator to notify telecommunications companies of their reporting requirements.

Here is a look at the data on which the Commission decided to suspend the ITSAP surcharge for the 2018 budget year:

- 21-percent decrease in wireline access lines or land lines (285,773 per month in 2017, compared to 363,888 in 2016).
- 45-percent decrease in wireless access lines (766,587 per month in 2017, compared to 1,384,720).
- 34-percent decrease in ITSAP recipients (2,555 average per month in 2017, compared to 3,880).
- The number of ITSAP recipients has declined by nearly 90 percent since 2011, when 25,310 Idahoans received assistance.
- From 2015 to 2016, the number of land lines declined 17 percent, while the number of wireless lines dropped 2 percent.

Go here to read the [Commission's order](#). To access all documents in the case, go to [www.puc.idaho.gov](http://www.puc.idaho.gov), click on "Open Cases" under the Telecommunications heading and scroll down to case number GNR-T-18-03.