ATTORNEY GENERAL GEORGE JEPSEN

ATTORNEY GENERAL SUPPORTS FINE
OF AT&T FOR VIOLATING SERVICE STANDARDS

For Immediate Release   WEDNESDAY MARCH 2, 2011

HARTFORD – State utility regulators have put one of the state's largest telecommunications companies on notice that the safety of Connecticut's citizens cannot be ignored, Attorney General George Jepsen said Wednesday.

Jepsen praised a decision by the state Department of Public Utility Control, which imposed a $745,000 civil fine on AT&T for failing to meet a service quality standard. The standard requires the company to make repairs to at least 90 percent of out-of-service problems reported within a 24-hour period.

"The out-of-service repair standard is very important, as it directly relates to public safety," Jepsen said. "Many Connecticut citizens rely upon working telephone service as their lifeline to emergency services and their only connection to the outside world," he said.

The DPUC had proposed a $1.2 million penalty against the company when it issued the notice of violation in May, 2010, an amount equal to $10,000 a month for every month in violation. After hearings, the regulators reduced the proposed penalty to $745,000 in their draft and in Wednesday's final decision because of payments the company made in the form of refunds and offsets in customer rates.

Jepsen had argued that the $1.2 million penalty was warranted because the company had failed to meet the standard every year since it was adopted in 2001. The company also failed to file a corrective plan as required by the regulation.

"While I believe the full, $1.2 million penalty was warranted, the $745,000 fine sends a clear message to AT&T that it needs to improve its response to out-of-service customers." Jepsen said. "The company's responses in the future will be closely monitored."

Assistant Attorneys General Michael C. Wertheimer and John S. Wright represented Jepsen in this case.

-END-

CONTACT: *Susan E. Kinsman, susan.kinsman@ct.gov; 860-808-5324; 860-478-9581 (cell)*