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John B. Rhodes, Chair

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PSC Expands Rural Low-Income Broadband Opportunities

— **Three Telecommunication Companies OK'd to Provide Lifeline Service in Rural Communities** —

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today designated three telecommunication companies eligible to provide Lifeline service to their communities. Lifeline is a federal program designed to make telephone and broadband services more affordable for low-income consumers. The three companies approved to participate in the program are SLIC Network Solutions, Inc., Valstar, Inc. and Armstrong Telecommunications, Inc.

“Lifeline provides low-income families a discount on monthly telephone service purchased from participating providers,” **said Commission Chair John B. Rhodes.** “The discounts, which can be applied to stand-alone broadband, bundled voice-broadband packages — either fixed or mobile — and stand-alone voice service help ensure that low-income consumers can afford 21st-century broadband and the access it provides to jobs, education and opportunities.”

SLIC, Valstar and Armstrong are participants in the New NY Broadband Program, a broadband initiative established by Governor Andrew M. Cuomo. SLIC was named an eligible carrier in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Rensselaer, St. Lawrence, Warren, and Washington counties, Valstar in Columbia County and Armstrong in the census blocks in Verizon New York Inc.’s franchise area that were made available as part of the New NY Broadband Program.

As eligible carriers, SLIC, Valstar, doing business as GTel, and Armstrong will provide additional choices for discounted basic service to meet the needs of New York’s Lifeline-eligible consumers. In addition, since these three carriers will also offer broadband services, many Lifeline-eligible customers will have the opportunity to receive more advanced telecommunications services than those available from currently designated carriers. It is the Commission’s responsibility to determine whether a telecommunication company may be declared an eligible telecommunications carrier in the state, which, among other things, authorizes the company to offer Lifeline service.

In 2015, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo established the \$500 million New NY Broadband Program, the nation’s largest and most ambitious state investment in broadband expansion. The program provides State grant funding to support projects that deliver high-speed Internet access to unserved and underserved areas of New York State at speeds of 100 Megabits-per-second (Mbps) in most areas, and 25 Mbps in the most remote areas.

Nearly 90 percent of all funding has been awarded to projects that will address unserved areas of the state, connecting these locations for the first time. By identifying broadband needs and developing

effective solutions, the program is closing the digital divide in New York State, ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to high-speed Internet and making Governor Cuomo's goal of "broadband for all" a reality.

Today's decisions may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at www.dps.ny.gov and entering Case Numbers 18-C-0386 (SLIC), 18-C-0319 (Valstar) and 18-C-0329 (Armstrong) in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.