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## City phone tax finds way to some rural residents' cell bills

In 1773, Colonial Americans heaved chests of tea into Boston Harbor rather than pay a tea tax when they had no representation in the British Parliament. "No taxation without representation" was the battle cry.

Two hundred thirty years later, some local residents are resurrecting the cry.

Some rural residents are angry that a city-imposed telecommunications tax has been added to their cellular phone bills.

The Hoopeston City Council approved the six percent Simplified Municipal Telecommunications Tax last June. It has taken since then for the tax to appear on some cell phone bills.

Carolyn Eyrich-Mastin, who has a physical address outside the city but receives her mail at a Hoopeston Post Office box, was charged an additional \$2.10 on her Cellular One bill because of the tax.

Cellular One representatives said Eyrich-Mastin should address her concern to Hoopeston Mayor Chalmers Flint, so she is doing just that. She has asked to address the issue at Tuesday's city council meeting.

"I don't live in the city of Hoopeston," Eyrich-Mastin said. "If I don't live in Hoopeston, I shouldn't have to pay city taxes and I think they should rebate it. I don't get to vote in your elections. It's taxation without representation."

Eyrich-Mastin said she has examined her cell phone bill since the tax was imposed, and was not surprised to see the tax. For others, the additional charge was a surprise.

Amy Davis, who lives near the Prairie Green Church of Christ in Iroquois County, found a double whammy on her January bill from Nextel. Not only was she charged the city tax, but since getting her phone in Sep-

*"I was just fuming that I  
 was charged city taxes."*

**Amy Davis  
 rural Hoopeston**

tember, she was also charged a five percent Vermilion County tax. Davis said all the taxes, including a two percent state tax, were lumped together this month under the heading of "city excise tax." "I was just fuming that I

was charged city taxes," she said.

Like Cellular One, Nextel was not sympathetic to Davis. "They informed me that it was on my bill and I had to pay it," she said.

Nextel wanted proof that Davis did not live in Hoopeston and did live in Iroquois County. Hoopeston administrative assistant Loni Garman was to send a letter to the company but Iroquois County officials told Davis to send a copy of her tax bill to Nextel. "I was the one that had to provide the proof that I was not in the city," she said.

**See CELL on other side**

## Wellington woman injured

WELLINGTON—A local woman was injured in a one-vehicle accident early Sunday morning.

Jamie Warner, 23, of Wellington was hospitalized at Carle Foundation Hospital, Urbana, where she was listed in fair condition Monday afternoon.

Warner was injured after she lost control of her 2000 Chevrolet pickup truck on Iroquois County Road 100 N, west of Bryce, according to the Iroquois County Sheriff's Department.

According to a press release, Warner lost control on the icy road and slid into a drainage ditch, which caused the truck to roll two and a half times, resting on its roof.

The Milford Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services responded to the accident, extricating Warner and taking her to Iroquois Memorial Hospital, Watseka, before she was transferred to Carle.

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Cell continued from other side

Despite having signed a subscriber agreement stating she lives in Iroquois County, Davis said Nextel was willing to go back only two months on the taxes, a response she is not happy with. "I expect credit," she said.

As of Monday afternoon, Hoopeston officials had only received three complaints, including Eyrich-Mastin and Davis, Garman said.

Garman said she suggested to Flint that the city compile a list of names, phone numbers and addresses of rural residents who have been charged the tax so they can contact cell phone companies and have the residents removed from the list.

At least one rural resident who found the tax had it removed already, without help from the city and without much trouble from the service provider.

Chuck Pajor said he found the tax on his bill and called Verizon Wireless. "It took a couple days but I got it off the bill," he said. "They were very helpful."

Like the others, Pajor felt it was unfair for him to pay the tax when he does not live in the city.

The Hoopeston City Council will meet at 7 p.m. Tuesday at city hall.



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Registration, voting aids available to elderly, handicapped

Vermilion County residents who, due to a disability, are unable to appear in person to register to vote may contact the County Clerk’s Voter Registration Department at (217) 431-2611 for assistance.

The department can arrange for a bipartisan team of deputy registrars to provide in-home registration services, said county clerk Lynn Foster.

The last day for county residents outside Danville to register to vote before the April 1 consolidated election is Tuesday, March 4.

Additionally, Illinois law provides for absentee voting for those who are disabled or incapacitated. Those who wish to vote absentee by mail should request an application from the county clerk’s office as soon as possible after Thursday, Feb. 20. The voter must mail the completed application back in order to have a ballot send by mail. The last day on which an absentee ballot may be mailed to a voter is Thursday, March 27.



Voters who are permanently disabled may request an application for a special identification card which will enable them to automatically receive absentee ballot applications for every election for five years. The card is also renewable. “This card is very convenient for our permanently disabled voters,” Foster said. “We have had great success with this program.

For further information on absentee voting, please call (217) 431-2614.

Voting aids and assistance in marking the ballot are provided in all Vermilion County polling places for all elections, Foster said.

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