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Champaign- You may be paying way too much to keep your cell phone on every month. A report by the Illinois Citizens Utility Board shows nearly 75 percent of phone users pay for features they never use. The board is a non-for profit utility watchdog organization. Their study looked at nearly 7,000 Illinois cell phone bills and found more than 73 percent of wireless customers could save hundreds annually by switching plans or cutting unnecessary features.

"Wireless companies nickel and dime us to death," says Bryan McDaniel with the Citizens Utility Board.

Those nickels and dimes can really add up. The group found the average caller could save nearly \$28 a month or more than \$300 annually.

Michael Beem doesn't even look at his bill anymore because of miscellaneous charges.

"You can even call in and ask about it and the people you call can't explain what some of those surcharges, and taxes and fees and things are," says Beem.

The study also found most bills included unused minutes, wasting on average almost 7.5 hours a month.

"I constantly have rollover minutes that are expiring and different things like that," says Beem

But there are ways you can save on your next bill. Stop paying for unused minutes by choosing smaller calling plans and monitoring your bill to make sure your plan fits your needs. The same goes for text messaging. Consider a pay as you go plan if you don't use a lot of minutes. Don't pay for insurance on your phone as it's often so limited it won't cover a new phone if you need it.

And don't opt for extras like 411 calls or road-side assistance. The report didn't single out any one phone company. The report analyzed the data from thousands of phone bills by using the CUB's Cellphone Saver, an online tool that gives detailed information on how callers can cut costs.

The Cellphone Saver allows you to download your phone bill right into the program but doesn't keep your information for more than 24-hours in order to keep your information safe.

Reported by Kate Springer.

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Ex-ESL deputy liquor chief accused of corruption

August 20, 2009 09:23 EDT

EAST ST. LOUIS, Ill. (AP) -- A federal grand jury contends the former deputy liquor commissioner in East St. Louis used his position to seek cash, booze and sexual favors from liquor license holders.

Thirty-one-year-old Walter Hill of Belleville was indicted Wednesday on charges that accuse him of lying to the FBI and the Internal Revenue Service, conspiring to extort, attempted extortion and influence peddling.

Authorities allege Hill sought and got money and property including liquor and sexual favors from local businesses.

Federal agents raided Hill's City Hall office in March. He was placed on administrative leave, and city leaders wrote his position out of the city budget in May.

Hill doesn't have a listed home telephone number and couldn't be reached for comment.

Information from: Belleville News-Democrat,
<http://www.bnd.com>

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