Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 12, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

On May 6, 2014, nearly 90 U.S. House members signed a bipartisan letter calling on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to move forward on reforms to the Universal Service Fund (USF) to ensure that consumers in areas served by small, rate-of-return providers have the same choice among reasonably comparable telecom services at reasonably comparable rates that urban consumers already benefit from. But outdated rules tie USF support for small rate-of-return-regulated carriers to the provision of "plain old telephone service" (POTS), meaning their rural customers must purchase voice in order to receive affordable broadband. It is long past time to finish the job by updating USF for a marketplace that gives consumers a full set of choices between quality voice and broadband services. Small rural carriers have worked hard to provide innovative services to some of the most difficult-to-serve parts of our country, only to see obsolete, anti-consumer rules put broadband out of the reach of some consumers by unnecessarily cutting support.

The FCC is in its fourth year of work on the Connect America Fund (CAF) that distributes USF support to larger price cap carriers and – because it isn't tied specifically to the purchase of voice – enables those providers to offer broadband-only service to their rural customers. The amount of time it has taken just to implement the CAF for 13 larger carriers – a number of whom have indicated the CAF still might not work for them – makes clear that a much simpler and straightforward plan that similarly empowers rate-of-return carriers and their customers is needed. Long-term options for USF support modifications can and certainly should be explored as well, but not at the expense of an immediate, targeted solution to the issue highlighted in this and last year's letters.

We continue to support efforts to update USF while applying appropriate, sufficient program budgets and ensuring USF distributions are invested prudently and reasonably, which helps provide the credibility necessary for the FCC to fulfill its statutory mandate. Previous USF reform stumbles have hindered rural broadband investment; and your agency now has an opportunity to provide certainty to small, rural carriers, encourage investment in rural broadband, and offer consumers greater choice by finally reforming USF for the broadband era. We look forward to working with you to accomplish in the very near future what already has broad

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support in Congress and will be essential to providing all Americans with the opportunity to participate in the global broadband economy.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Kevin Cramer
Member of Congress

Don Young
Member of Congress

Martha Roby
Member of Congress

Rick Crawford
Member of Congress

French Hill
Member of Congress

Steve Womack
Member of Congress

Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress

Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress

Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

Jared Polis
Member of Congress

Scott Tipton
Member of Congress

Ken Buck
Member of Congress

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress

Mike Coffman
Member of Congress

Earl L 'Buddy' Carter
Member of Congress

Austin Scott
Member of Congress

Doug Collins
Member of Congress

Rick W. Allen
Member of Congress

Rod Blum
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack
Member of Congress

David Young
Member of Congress

Steve King
Member of Congress

Raul Labrador
Member of Congress

Mike Simpson
Member of Congress

Peter Roskam
Member of Congress

Mike Bost
Member of Congress

Rodney Davis
Member of Congress

John Shimkus
Member of Congress

Adam Kinzinger
Member of Congress

Cheri Bustos
Member of Congress

Todd Rokita
Member of Congress

Luke Messer
Member of Congress

Tim Huelskamp
Member of Congress

Michael McCaul
Member of Congress

Rubén Hinojosa
Member of Congress

Lamar Smith
Member of Congress

Blake Farenthold
Member of Congress

Chris Stewart
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress

Reid Ribble
Member of Congress

Jason Smith
Member of Congress

K. Michael Conaway
Member of Congress

Randy Neugebauer
Member of Congress

Will Hurd
Member of Congress

Rob Bishop
Member of Congress

H. Morgan Griffith
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Jim Sensenbrenner
Member of Congress

Sean P. Duffy
Member of Congress

Cynthia Lummis
Member of Congress

Gwen Graham
Member of Congress

David Rouzer
Member of Congress

Steve Pearce
Member of Congress

Chris Gibson
Member of Congress

Louise Slaughter
Member of Congress

Bill Johnson
Member of Congress

Markwayne Mullin
Member of Congress

Tom Cole
Member of Congress

Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress

Joe Wilson
Member of Congress

Scott DesJarlais
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Mark Amodei
Member of Congress

Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress

Robert Latta
Member of Congress

Jim Bridenstine
Member of Congress

Frank Lucas
Member of Congress

Steve Russell OK-5
Member of Congress

Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress

Kristi Noem
Member of Congress

Louie Gohmert
Member of Congress

Lynn Jenkins CPA
Member of Congress

Brett Guthrie
Member of Congress

Andy Barr
Member of Congress

Tim Walberg
Member of Congress

Collin Peterson
Member of Congress

Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress

Billy Long
Member of Congress

Ryan Zinke
Member of Congress

Walter Jones
Member of Congress

Ed Whitfield
Member of Congress

Harold Rogers
Member of Congress

Charles W. Boustany Jr., MD
Member of Congress

John Kline
Member of Congress

Rick Nolan
Member of Congress

Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress

Sam Graves
Member of Congress

Gregg Harper
Member of Congress

Renee Ellmers
Member of Congress

Virginia Foxx
Member of Congress

Susan Brooks
Member of Congress

David G. Valadao
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Larry Bucshon, M.D.
Member of Congress

Tom Rice
Member of Congress

Todd Young
Member of Congress

John Ratcliffe
Member of Congress

Adrian Smith
Member of Congress

Jackie Walorski
Member of Congress

Pete Olson
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Tim Walz
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

Ann Wagner
Member of Congress

Filemon Vela
Member of Congress

Mac Thornberry
Member of Congress

David B. McKinley, P.E.
Member of Congress

Steve Stivers
Member of Congress