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NCB
Connect America
CAF

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

May 21, 2015

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

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We write you regarding the importance of the Federal Communications Commission's efforts to modernize the universal service fund for making broadband communications services available to all New Mexicans.

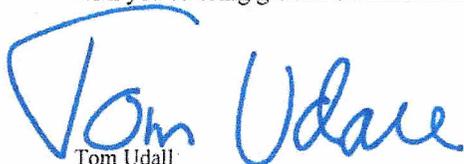
Restoring American leadership in broadband can help create opportunities for job growth, education, and healthcare. Rural Americans, however, are 13 times more likely to lack access to broadband than those in urban areas. In New Mexico, seventy-seven percent of New Mexicans living in rural areas lack access to fast broadband access to fixed broadband speeds of 25 megabits per second. Rural telephone cooperatives' continued commitment to serve rural residents of New Mexico is essential to tackling this appalling digital divide.

While rate of return carriers struggle to bring faster broadband speeds to their customers, the FCC has yet to finalize a funding mechanism to support such broadband service in high-cost rural areas. Under one proposed Connect America Fund II funding model, we understand that New Mexico's rate of return carriers could face a reduction of more than \$21 million in universal service support. We therefore urge the FCC to move forward to modernize universal service funding mechanisms for the broadband era in a manner that offers reasonable certainty for rural carriers to make long term investments in high cost areas.

As you work to modernize universal service, we also ask that you consider targeted proposals from rural carriers to better support broadband deployment in the short term. In particular, we ask you to consider allowing universal service support for broadband service to rural households that choose to not purchase other bundled services.

Thank you for your consideration within your rules and regulations. We look forward to continuing to work closely with you to bring greater broadband access to rural communities in New Mexico and across America.

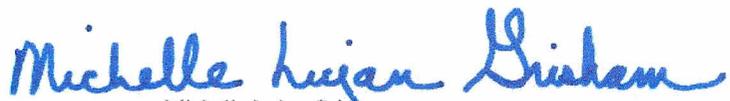
Sincerely,


Tom Udall
United States Senator


Stevan Pearce
United States Representative


Martin Heinrich
United States Senator


Ben Ray Luján
United States Representative


Michelle Lujan Grisham
United States Representative