

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No, 10-90; *Universal Service Reform – Mobility Fund*, WT Docket No. 10-208

On July 18th, I rode over to Marietta, Ohio where I listened to countless teachers, students, parents, small business owners and local government leaders express in glaring and poignant detail just how wide – and deep – digital and opportunities divides are in Appalachia. Pat of Athens, Ohio said this to me: “I’m tired of my area being short changed. I want equal footing, and equal opportunities for people in my region of the state, regardless of who they are, what they look like, who they know, or how much money they have.” Far too many families and communities in rural America share Pat’s fate, where subpar service, unaffordable service or simply no service at all are the norm, not the exception. And while we have made significant progress along the way, much more remains to be done.

Finding ways to connect communities that have been left behind has been an obsession of mine since I first arrived at the FCC some eight years ago. So I am pleased to be able to affirm to Pat and the others who were in attendance at the Marietta Town Hall and Connectivity Summit that we hear you, and with this item we are taking critical next steps in phase two of the Mobility Fund.

Today, we establish a framework for the Mobility Fund Phase II challenge process. Importantly, we adopt an industry consensus proposal to undertake a new, one-time data collection on deployment of 4G LTE. This is a watershed decision, because as I have said before, lack of good data would prolong the time it takes to deliver on the Mobility Fund’s stated objective of bringing connectivity to unserved communities. And as promised earlier this year, we have restructured an admittedly complex process to minimize the burdens on challengers, including small providers who just want to bring connectivity to more communities.

Our goal, in large part, is to promote local economies in underserved and rural communities through the deployment of essential mobile services. With the exciting prospects of 5G inching closer by the day, we must ensure that all areas, no matter how remote, have access to at least 4G LTE service. To achieve this goal and ensure that connectivity is ubiquitous, we must allocate our limited universal service funds as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Thank you to the Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force and the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau for your dedicated and laudable efforts to promote broadband deployment in rural America. Whether it is connected cars, access to healthcare, or simply being able to let friends and family know that you are on the way home during that long drive, your efforts will ensure that underserved and unserved communities in rural America reap the benefits of those technological innovations that so many of us outside of Appalachia take for granted.