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FCC Mail Room



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

August 29, 2014

TODD ROKITA
4TH DISTRICT, INDIANA

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE
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COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
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Hon. Tom Wheeler, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St., SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

As each day passes without broadband in rural America, the digital divide widens between our urban and rural populations. In the 1930s, electric cooperatives brought electricity to rural America when the for-profit utilities would not. Today, that same scenario is being replayed as we deploy broadband service in rural America. Robust broadband service is no longer a luxury, but rather a necessity for full participation in our economy and society.

The Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II represents a tremendous opportunity to fulfill the promise of ubiquitous access to high speed internet for every American. I commend the FCC's efforts to ensure that CAF funds are maximized to their best use, and recognize the complexities of this effort. I encourage the Commission to create an inclusive process where all eligible providers, including electric cooperatives, have an opportunity to compete for support by offering effective solutions to close the digital divide between rural and urban areas.

In addition, I urge the commission to work on raising the minimum broadband speed associated with CAF Phase II funding. Deploying broadband networks using outdated speeds will only serve to increase the digital divide.

Without a level playing field, open to competition, rural America may never have the chance to experience the educational opportunities, employment prospects, and advanced healthcare that broadband delivers to those lucky enough to live in low cost, high population centers.

In my district, Fulton County REMC, Hendricks Power Cooperative, Parke County REMC, South Central Indiana REMC and Tipmont REMC have submitted Expressions of Interest to the FCC regarding CAF Phase II. By making CAF funds available to electric cooperatives, they could be a valuable asset in achieving the goal of providing accessible, affordable and reliable broadband to their members.

I look forward to working with the Commission to bring broadband service to my constituents in rural America.

Sincerely,

Todd Rokita
Member of Congress