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COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS

ARMED SERVICES

COMMERCE, SCIENCE
AND TRANSPORTATION

RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

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

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Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I write to emphasize to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) the importance of its final rules for Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF II). Bringing broadband to unserved households and businesses in Missouri is critical to rural development.

In 2011, the FCC undertook a monumental transition of the Universal Service program for many rural areas from telephony to broadband. I applaud the Commission for this effort. However, over the last several years, I have observed challenges the FCC faced implementing this transition as the rules have not always corresponded to real-world situations. Because CAF II represents the final phase of Universal Service reform for many rural areas, it is critically important the FCC heed the advice of local communities and stakeholders to ensure its rules for CAF II are practical, accountable, and targeted in order to extend broadband service where it does not already exist.

The FCC's June 10th CAF II order and further notice of proposed rulemaking contemplates a number of changes – the details of which will likely determine the success of CAF II in Missouri, and across the country. Specifically, adopting a 10 Mbps download speed for CAF II support should be accompanied with a 10 year funding period to allow adequate time for construction. Moreover, the FCC needs to allow flexibility in final build out plans to account for specific situations that may not be amenable to a one-size-fits-all approach. Lastly, it is essential that the Commission ensure these limited funds are targeted to rural, unserved households and businesses.

Households and businesses in Missouri stand to benefit from CAF II if it is implemented correctly. I strongly urge the Commission to reconcile its rules for CAF II with the practical challenges of building broadband to unserved areas. It is imperative to close the digital divide between rural and urban America, and the FCC must seize CAF II as an opportunity to do so.

Sincerely,



Roy Blunt
United States Senator