

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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September 6, 2016

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

Dear Commissioner Wheeler,

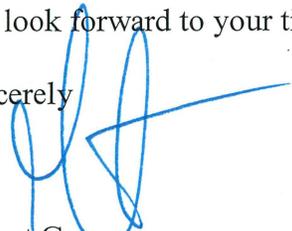
We would like to draw your attention to the catastrophic flooding that occurred in South Louisiana this August, impacting the entire Capital Region. More than 135,000 homes and businesses were flooded and in some communities over 90 percent of the homes were impacted. The enormity of what has been deemed a 1,000-year event and the largest natural disaster since Hurricane Sandy cannot be overstated. With the devastation of an entire region, we recognize the significant piece wireless and telecommunications connectivity play in recovery efforts and ongoing emergency communications.

In collaboration with other federal agency response, the Federal Communications Commission has a vital role to ensure that this community rebuilds, that individuals return home, and the community retains its economic vitality by maintaining access to communication. Efforts by the Louisiana Governor's Office and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to address the housing needs should be coupled with this agency to ensure adequate lines of communications are established to these temporary housing situations. The FCC has resources and tools available that can greatly aid in important, reliable connectivity for affected homes and communities recovering from the devastation. The FCC's capabilities will help ensure that first responders are able to receive and transmit emergency calls, that consumers can communicate with government and contractors as they rebuild their homes, and that businesses will be able to remain responsive to the fluctuating demands for specific recovery goods and services..

We cannot stress enough the importance of access to communication lines for this entire region during this incredibly challenging time and we look to your efforts in making this recovery as quick and effective as possible.

We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely



Garret Graves
Member of Congress



Cedric Richmond
Member of Congress



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

October 3, 2016

The Honorable Garret Graves
U.S. House of Representatives
204 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Graves:

Thank you for your letter regarding the flooding in south Louisiana. On behalf of everyone here at the Federal Communications Commission, I extend our greatest sympathies to the citizens of Louisiana affected by the recent flooding. We have been actively monitoring the impact of the flooding on communications services in the area and are coordinating with our colleagues at FEMA and DHS in their ongoing relief and recovery efforts.

As with any disaster of this nature, our first priority has been to assess the status of communications networks that are essential for emergency communications, including the public's ability to call 911. We are working with Public Safety Answering Points in the Baton Rouge area to ensure that 911 service continues to be functional for affected citizens. We have also been in touch with communications providers in the region about their restoration and coordination efforts. While some outages to cell sites and other facilities have occurred, affected wireless carriers have largely been able to reroute traffic to other facilities, and/or successfully deploy temporary cell sites on light trucks, emergency communications vehicles, and mobile command centers. Carriers have also permitted roaming on one another's networks, engaged in mutual aid, and are offering free Wi-Fi and phone charging in retail stores and shelters. Finally, several wireless providers have offered credits or free service to affected customers, and/or have suspended collections for affected subscribers during this period.¹ Given that cell phones function as literal lifelines for so many people during disasters, this good-faith cooperation among wireless providers is encouraging, but we will continue to monitor the situation.

We also recognize that for many of Louisiana's citizens and businesses in the affected region, the flooding has caused displacement and loss of homes and property that will take months or longer to recover from. We recognize that 'restoration' is not complete until community life, including local business activity, returns to normal. We will continue to work with wireless providers and other State and Federal agencies to assist with their restoration in the near term. We are also committed to doing what we can over the longer term to help displaced residents and businesses secure access to the communications services they need. We stand ready to work with you and your colleagues on the Louisiana Public Service Commission in this effort.

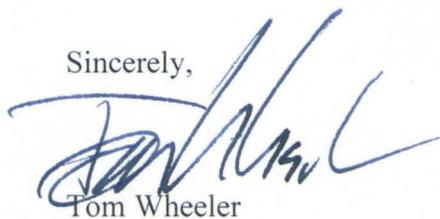
As we discussed during our recent phone call, the Commission is continuing to analyze the situation in Louisiana to learn how communications networks have been impacted by the

¹ See, e.g., Verizon, <https://www.verizonwireless.com/featured/relief/>; AT&T, "Relief for AT&T Customers Impacted by Louisiana Floods" (Aug. 20, 2016), http://about.att.com/newsroom/network_disaster_recovery_louisiana.html.

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flooding and what is being done restore services as quickly as possible. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Tom Wheeler



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

October 3, 2016

The Honorable Cedric L. Richmond
U.S. House of Representatives
240 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

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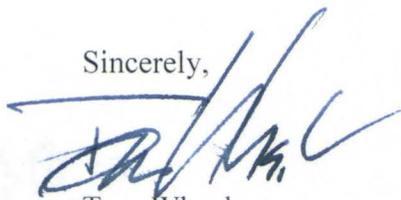
Let me also assure you that the Commission is continuing to analyze the situation in Louisiana to learn how communications networks have been impacted by the flooding and what

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Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler