

# United States Senate 1104

December 18, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai, Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

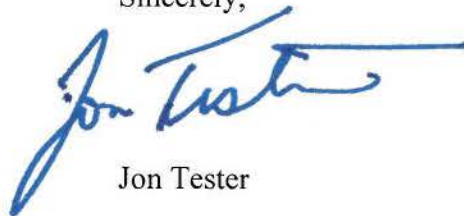
Dear Chairman Pai:

I write to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to take action by the end of the year to ensure that Alternative Connect America Model (A-CAM) broadband funding is fully funded. Thousands of Montanans are depending on the FCC to follow through on promises to connect rural Americans to high-speed internet services. Access to high-speed Internet is vital to growing rural economies, staying connected with friends and family, and accessing information during emergencies. Fortunately, Montana boasts a handful of rural carriers that are ready to efficiently utilize A-CAM funding to deploy the infrastructure required to deliver high-speed service. That is why we must make sure A-CAM is fully funded each year.

I meet directly with Montana families and businesses on a regular basis, and they consistently tell me about the need for improved high-speed internet access. While Montana is experiencing significant progress, especially in areas served by small carriers, there is still a lot of work left to do. For rural America to truly compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy, high-speed internet must be available to all at a reasonable price. We cannot afford to stop short of universal high-speed internet service.

Throughout your confirmation process, you expressed your commitment to closing the divide between urban and rural internet access. As a step toward following through on your promise, please fully fund A-CAM by the end of the year. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

February 13, 2018

The Honorable Jon Tester  
United States Senate  
311 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Tester:

Thank you for your letter on the importance of connecting additional rural consumers in Montana to high-speed broadband. Your views are very important and will be entered into the record of our proceeding on the Connect America Fund and considered as part of the Commission's review.

In my first remarks to FCC staff as Chairman, I declared that my highest priority would be making sure every American who wants high-speed Internet access can get it. Rural Americans deserve the same digital access as those living in urban areas. A key way to reach this goal is by updating the high-cost universal service program to encourage cooperatives and other small, rural carriers to build more online infrastructure.

We need more deployment in sparsely populated rural areas if we're going to extend digital opportunity to all Americans. But I've heard from community leaders, Congress, and carriers that insufficient, unpredictable funding has kept them from reaching this goal. That is why I recently shared with my fellow commissioners an order that would promote more high-speed broadband deployment in rural areas. If adopted, it would provide over \$500 million in additional funding for cooperatives and small rural carriers—including those participating in the Alternative Connect America Model (A-CAM) plan. And it seeks public input on both further increasing support to current A-CAM recipients and on giving legacy rate-of-return carriers a new chance to elect model-based support. Increased funding will boost broadband deployment in rural America, and the accompanying reforms will put our high-cost system on a more efficient path, helping to ensure that every American can benefit from the digital revolution.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ajit V. Pai".

Ajit V. Pai