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COMMITTEES:

AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION AND FORESTRY
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VETERANS' AFFAIRS

December 12, 2017

Received & Inspected

DEC 18 2017

FCC Mailroom

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

Dear Chairman Pai:


Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90

Enclosed please find a letter from seven rural Arkansas broadband providers requesting that the Commission authorize additional funding for the Alternative Connect America Model (A-CAM) plan.

Fully funding the A-CAM plan as requested will result in significant expansion of broadband connectivity for rural consumers in Arkansas. For this reason, I request that you take into consideration and act with approval to fund the A-CAM plan as requested so more rural Arkansas residents can fully utilize the opportunities afforded by access to broadband. I also urge you to expeditiously evaluate additional universal service funding for those Arkansas rural carriers not participating in the A-CAM plan.

Thank you for your commitment to closing the digital divide and consideration on this important matter.

Sincerely,


John Boozman
U.S. Senator

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EL DORADO, AR 71730
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December 4, 2017

Ms. Marlene Dortch
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90

Dear Ms. Dortch:

The Alternative Connect America Model (A-CAM) is an innovative way to make funds available to support increased broadband deployment in Arkansas and other states. The Federal Communications Commission (“Commission”) is to be commended for creating the A-CAM mechanism and prioritizing the expansion of broadband in rural America. The undersigned Arkansas based A-CAM Electing Companies (Companies) elected to operate under the A-CAM program and to assume the obligations to expand broadband contained in the program. Those companies now write imploring the Commission to take action before the end of this year to authorize additional A-CAM funding up to \$200/month per eligible customer location. The additional funding will enable more rural consumers in Arkansas to have broadband connectivity that has become essential for education, economic development and healthcare.

The Companies have already committed to expanding broadband further if more funding is made available. The stage is set for expansion of broadband availability. All that is needed is action by the Commission to make the additional funding available. Work has already begun upgrading network infrastructure in our communities and our communities are eager for the Companies to further extend the reach of those networks to additional customers. By making the funds available now, the Commission will enable the Companies to design network upgrades in the most efficient manner to better serve our communities without the need to revisit projects and re-engineer for further expansion.

The additional funding will result in tangible, already identified gains in broadband availability. The seven companies in Arkansas that elected the revised offer of A-CAM support in January 2017 committed at that time to deploy broadband to a specific number of additional locations if further funding were made available by December 31, 2017. Collectively, additional funding up to \$200/month per location would result in 2,688 additional A-CAM funded locations with at least 10/1 Mbps broadband service in Arkansas, a 15 percent increase. Of that, 1,615 locations in Arkansas would have access to 25/3 Mbps broadband service, while 1,073 locations would newly have access to service of at least 10/1 Mbps. The number of A-CAM funded locations that would remain on “reasonable request” in Arkansas would decrease by 72 percent if funding is increased to this level.

Ms. Marlene Dortch

December 4, 2017

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The additional funding to further extend broadband in our communities would result in broader economic and social benefits for rural Arkansans and benefit not just those areas but the entire state. The economic, educational and health benefits that would accrue to the state and its citizens would provide opportunities to compete and thrive in the global economy.

We implore the Commission to act now to make additional funding available so that the promise of broadband expansion contained in its original decision to provide A-CAM funding for up to \$200/month per eligible location can be realized.

Sincerely,

The Arkansas A-CAM Companies

Arkansas Telephone Company
E. Ritter Telephone Company
Mountain View Telephone Company
Scott County Telephone Company
Tri-County Telephone Company
Walnut Hill Telephone Company
Yelcot Telephone Company

cc: Chairman Ajit Pai
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Michael O’Rielly
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Brendan Carr



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

February 13, 2018

The Honorable John Boozman
United States Senate
141 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Boozman:

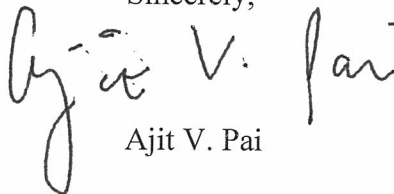
Thank you for your letter on the importance of connecting additional rural consumers in Arkansas to high-speed broadband. Your views are very important and will be entered into the record of our proceeding on the Connect America Fund and considered as part of the Commission's review.

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,



Ajit V. Pai