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SERVING GRANITE CITY, MITCHELL, AND PONTOON BEACH

In the Matter of

Wireline Competition Bureau Seeking )  
Comments on E-rate Category Two )

WC Docket No. 13-184

It is my honor and privilege to provide input on the impact of having access to secure sufficient funding for our library WiFi and internet connections. Before the E-rate Modernization in 2014, our library received no funds for then, Priority 2 services. In fact, knowing we were at a less than 90% discount rate, and knowing that there would be no funding left after all requests for internet access were funded, our library didn't apply before 2014. But, then the E-rate Modernization occurred, and we applied for the 81% discount rate that we now receive.

Because we now qualify, we have used our E-rate to upgrade outdated equipment. We will soon be offering even better service because of E-rate: we are about to have fiber available at both of our library locations. Without the E-rate Modernization our library would not be able to afford to make this core community service available. With fiber, our Wi-Fi will be stronger, faster, and more able to support the various needs of the 43,757 people living in our service area.

Our community suffers from an unemployment rate of approximately 7.2%. Almost 67% of our students are eligible for the free and reduced lunch program. While ours is certainly not the most disadvantaged in the country, our community is suffering and many people just do not have Internet access in their homes. More and more people turn to our library to provide the online access they need to apply for jobs or financial assistance, to complete their annual tax returns, to interact with an increasingly electronic government, to seek health information, to communicate with friends and family from around the globe, to be informed citizens, to learn, to grow, and to be active in our democracy. With our WiFi access we are now able to sell fishing and hunting licenses and we will soon become a Passport Acceptance Facility for the Department of State.

Please maintain secure funding for libraries through the full five year budget period as adopted during the 2014 Modernization. Our community depends on that funding and the difference it makes is crucial.