

August 18, 2017

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

Chairman Pai:

I would like to thank you for the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) staff participation in a recent roundtable discussion with me and with Association of Missouri Electric Cooperatives (AMEC) members. This roundtable, which was held at the Missouri State Fair in Sedalia, Missouri on August 17, 2017, was an important opportunity for AMEC members to explain the challenges they are facing in connecting their rural members with access to broadband – a priority for me and an issue that has been a recent focus of the FCC. While this roundtable was intended to be a listening session for the federal representatives present, a matter regarding on ongoing proceeding before the FCC, the upcoming Connect America Fund Phase II Auction, was discussed by the AMEC members. Given that the FCC has an open proceeding on this matter I wanted to submit a summary of our discussion and my views for the record.

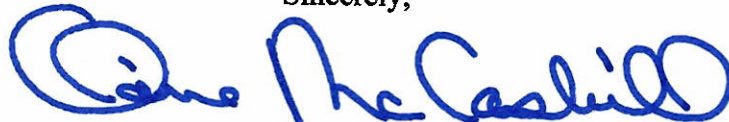
During the discussion, AMEC members explained that for communities in rural Missouri to survive and flourish, they need access to reliable, high speed broadband networks capable of delivering 1 Gig service, which is comparable to services in urban areas. They emphasized that the FCC's upcoming Connect America Fund Phase II Auction presents a tremendous opportunity to connect these unserved rural Missouri areas. To do so, however, AMEC members explained that the FCC must adopt safeguards to ensure that entities only bid in the auction if they are capable of delivering the requisite speed and capacity. For example, the FCC could direct USAC to hire a third-party to review the short-form applications. The members expressed concern that the FCC's proposal, as currently structured, lacks sufficient upfront review to prevent bidders from winning and ultimately failing to deliver the service at the appropriate speeds. Such a result would not only lead to waste and fraud of scarce universal service funds but, more importantly, would leave communities in rural Missouri without access to broadband.

AMEC and its member cooperatives have made incredible progress in providing their members access to high speed broadband – providing thousands of miles of fiber broadband throughout rural Missouri. However, as you are aware, 60 percent of Missourians in rural communities still lack access to broadband. AMEC is committed to continuing their progress in closing this gap, they just need a little assistance from the FCC in providing them with a level playing field.

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Again, thank you for providing Missourians the opportunity to have their voices heard on this important topic and I look forward to working with the FCC to ensure all my constituents have access to high speed broadband.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Claire McCaskill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Claire" written in a large, stylized loop, followed by "McCaskill" in a more compact, cursive script.

Claire McCaskill
United States Senator