

Proceeding: **IN THE MATER OF ASSESSMENT AND COLLECTION OF REGULATORY FE** Record 1 of 1

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Proceeding Name: **98-36** Author Name: _____

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May 19, 1998

Federal Communications Commission
Common Carrier Bureau

Dear Sir/Madam:

We would like to comment on the proposed changes in the funding level for the E-rate discounts for which libraries and schools have already submitted applications. On behalf of the 6,500 members of the Texas Library Association, we urge the FCC to maintain the E-rate fund at the highest possible rate, preferably no lower than the 2 billion dollars for which applications have already been submitted.

To date, nearly 1,500 applications have been submitted by Texas schools and public libraries. Many of these schools and libraries are in extremely isolated rural areas. For these places, these resources are the most critically important and unsubsidized access is prohibitively expensive. Many of these are places with very limited staffs who have completed these complicated forms in the good-faith expectation that their requests would be considered on the terms on which they were solicited. The actions now under consideration by the FCC represent a mid-course change that would eliminate libraries that would have been funded under the initial terms.

Library and school staffs have spent many hours creating technology plans, consulting with providers, completing forms, and navigating a complicated web page submission process. If the FCC reduces the fund and eliminates these libraries, they will rightly assume that there is little purpose in reapplying in future. This action could create a very serious obstacle to the deployment of Internet in the places it is most needed.

The phone companies and other providers have reaped tremendous profits in both dollars and public relations value from the Telecommunications Act. It is now time for libraries and schools and the communities they serve to receive the benefits they have already been promised. To do anything else at this time would be extremely unfair and do irreparable harm to these communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Mark Smith
Director of Communications