

**Mike Crapo**  
United States Senator  
239 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**James Risch**  
United States Senator  
483 Russell Senate Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20510



**Mike Simpson**  
Member of Congress  
2312 Rayburn House Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**Raúl Labrador**  
Member of Congress  
1523 Longworth House Office Bldg.  
Washington, D.C. 20515

September 10, 2014

963

The Honorable Tom Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

Broadband Internet access has become an essential part of the Idaho economic and social fabrics in our state and rural communities, as a tool to build businesses, apply for jobs, and enhance educational opportunities. With robust broadband service, even a small Idaho town can rely on its residents' talent and determination to compete with the world. Without it, the same community risks being left behind in today's technology-centric economy.

Phase II of the Connect America Fund ("CAF II") offers a tremendous opportunity to bring speedier, fiber-fed broadband connections to Idaho rural communities that would not otherwise have this important communication resource. Thanks to the Commission's well-publicized efforts, many Idaho rural communities are now counting on CAF II. CAF II represents the final phase of Universal Service reform, therefore, its rules will effectively determine whether or not our rural residents will have a broadband connection or not.

We are writing today to emphasize how important it is to ensure that the final details allow CAF II to live up to its promise. We are concerned that if the Commission more than doubles the speed requirements (from 4 Mbps to 10 Mbps) without allowing the appropriate level of flexibility in other elements of CAF II, the program's overall mission could be endangered. A number of constructive ideas that could help achieve the speedier network goals without exceeding the CAF II annual budget could include extending the term of support up to ten years and providing flexibility on the build-out parameters. We request that you seriously consider these ideas, along with other constructive feedback you receive from interested stakeholders.

The Honorable Tom Wheeler  
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Now that we are in the final phase, the Idaho delegation hopes the CAF II standards can ensure that those unserved Idaho customers are reached, while also requiring competitive carriers to meet a reasonable standard of verification before depriving a community of CAF II support.

Thank you for considering our concerns, and we look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Mike Crapo  
United States Senator



Jim Risch  
United States Senator



Mike Simpson  
Member of Congress



Raúl Labrador  
Member of Congress



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

September 19, 2014

The Honorable Michael Crapo  
United States Senate  
239 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Crapo:

Thank you for your letter regarding the implementation of certain aspects of Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF II). In your letter, you express concerns that the overall mission of the CAF II program could be endangered if the Commission increases the current broadband speed benchmark for program recipients to 10 Mbps downstream /1 Mbps upstream without allowing flexibility in other elements of the program, as well as suggest several proposals to provide such flexibility. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

I agree with you that high-speed broadband access is an essential component for economic growth in rural communities. The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers and businesses in rural America have the same opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the United States of the 21st century. We are focused on updating the universal service high-cost program to ensure that we are delivering the best possible voice and broadband experiences to rural America within the confines of our Connect America budget, while providing increased certainty and predictability for all carriers and a climate for increased broadband expansion.

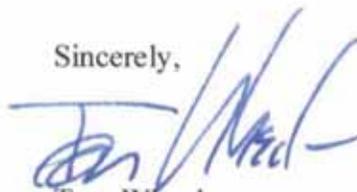
In April, the Commission adopted a *Connect America Fund Phase II Report and Order* to move forward with Phase II of the Connect America Fund for price-cap carriers. In addition, in an associated *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM)*, the Commission sought comment on a number of the issues you raise, including revising the current broadband performance obligations to require minimum speeds of 10 Mbps downstream, and applying the same performance obligations to all recipients of Phase II support and to rate-of-return carriers. The *FNPRM* also seeks comment on a proposal to allow CAF II recipients more flexibility in meeting their performance obligations, such as the ability to substitute locations in partially-served census blocks for locations in the unserved census block for which it received support. The record on these issues just closed and is under consideration by Commission staff.

We expect a robust record on these topics and I welcome a dialogue with stakeholders about how best to accomplish our shared objectives. I look forward to working with you as we continue reforming and modernizing the universal service fund high-cost program – as well as other components of the Fund – to ensure that all Americans have access to robust voice and broadband services.

Page 2—The Honorable Michael Crapo

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

Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler



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THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

September 19, 2014

The Honorable Raúl Labrador  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1523 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Labrador:

Thank you for your letter regarding the implementation of certain aspects of Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF II). In your letter, you express concerns that the overall mission of the CAF II program could be endangered if the Commission increases the current broadband speed benchmark for program recipients to 10 Mbps downstream /1 Mbps upstream without allowing flexibility in other elements of the program, as well as suggest several proposals to provide such flexibility. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

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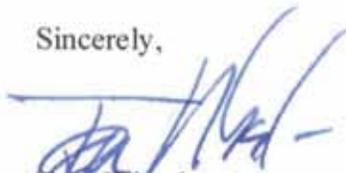
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Page 2—The Honorable Raúl Labrador

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Tom Wheeler



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THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

September 19, 2014

The Honorable Jim Risch  
United States Senate  
483 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Risch:

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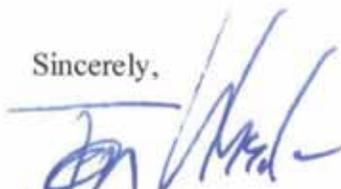
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Page 2—The Honorable Jim Risch

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Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

September 19, 2014

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U.S. House of Representatives  
2312 Rayburn House Office Building  
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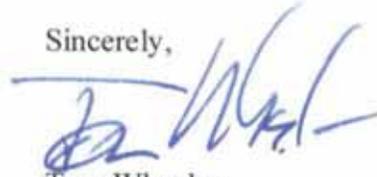
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