



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM
SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

October 8, 2014

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW, Suite 800
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

I write in strong support of the proposal by AT&T and DirecTV to merge their operations. The companies' promises to expand vitally important high-speed Internet service to small towns and rural areas that historically have not had first-class online access is a compelling reason for the Federal government to approve the merger.

As chairman of the Georgia Legislative Rural Caucus, the issue of high-speed Internet deployment in rural communities is especially important to me. The Caucus is a bipartisan group that takes a leading role in issues and legislation that impact agriculture, natural resources and the needs of the state's rural communities.

My work in the Georgia General Assembly over the past four years should leave no doubt as to why I feel so strongly about the need to expand modern, high-speed Internet service to all parts of Georgia, whatever the population density. In 2013, with my strong support, the General Assembly passed and Governor Nathan Deal signed into law legislation that expands the eligibility requirement for Georgia's HOPE Grant program, which helps eligible Georgians pay for the costs of attending technical college in Georgia. We expect this change will bring up to 5,000 new students to the state's technical schools and help fill technical positions throughout the state.

I firmly believe that we have a responsibility to improve access to education at all levels. By expanding access to high-speed Internet service, as AT&T and DirecTV have promised, Georgia will be able to take another important step forward in helping students and workers gain access to affordable education and workplace training.

Healthcare is another area where faster and expanded access to the Internet will positively affect Georgia. During the 2014 legislative session, I joined Governor Deal as he announced a plan to improve access to healthcare in rural Georgia. The governor's plan includes proposals to increase healthcare communication and ensure that every Georgian is reasonably close to a healthcare provider, should a need or emergency arise.



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As members of the Commission are no doubt aware, the spread of new, high-speed Internet systems offers significant potential healthcare benefits to people living with medical conditions. New systems that use the Internet to monitor the health and well-being of at-risk residents are not only often more affordable, they also can in some cases help seniors and others delay the cost and difficulties of transitioning to assisted living.

Broadband deployment is a major economic and quality of life issue for rural communities. I urge the FCC to approve the AT&T merger with DirecTV.

Regards,

Jason Shaw
State Representative
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