

JOHN HOEVEN
NORTH DAKOTA

338 RUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
TELEPHONE: (202) 224-2561
FAX: (202) 224-7999

hoeven.senate.gov

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE
APPROPRIATIONS
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
INDIAN AFFAIRS

October 22, 2014

Received & Inspected

NOV 03 2014

FCC Mail Room

1170

The Hon. Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554-0005

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

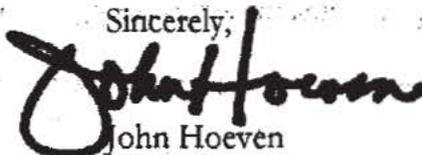
Access to reliable broadband Internet is an essential service for modern Americans. Many people rely on it to effectively communicate with their communities, access critical information, operate a business, and further educate themselves, among other things. These services are especially crucial for Americans who live in rural communities. As we move further in to the 21st century, the ability of rural Americans to have dependable Internet access will become increasingly important.

It is critically important that the millions of Americans who live in rural communities receive high-speed and reliable Internet connections. This transition of the Universal Service Fund to the Connect America Fund shows that the FCC recognizes how important broadband Internet is to the economic development of rural America.

Accordingly, as the Connect America Fund continues through Phase II, I encourage the FCC to continue its diligence in making sure that the rural communities are best served under its proposed rules. It is important that we increase the downstream speeds from 4 megabits per second (mbps) to 10mbps as proposed by the FCC. However, I believe this warrants an extension of Phase II's timeframe from 5 years to 10 years, which will allow the FCC to accurately measure the population of unserved areas and enable providers to adequately construct the necessary broadband infrastructure needed to service these areas. Finally, providers must be given flexibility in high cost locations in order to efficiently use their available funds to reach the maximum amount of people.

Thank you for your continued efforts to provide rural communities with the technology they need to grow and thrive. I urge you to allow local Internet Service Providers the time they need to adequately serve their rural customers.

Sincerely,



John Hoeven
U.S. Senator



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

December 23, 2014

The Honorable John Hoeven
United States Senate
120 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Hoeven:

Thank you for your letter requesting the Commission to consider proposals from broadband providers to permit some flexibility in the implementation of Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF Phase II). Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

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 areas of states within the confines of our Connect America budget, while providing increased certainty and predictability for all carriers and a climate for increased broadband expansion.

Last week, the Commission adopted a *Connect America Fund Phase II Report and Order* to move forward with Connect America for price-cap carriers. Importantly, the Order raises the minimum broadband speed from 4 Mbps to 10 Mbps, consistent with our statutory obligation to ensure that rural Americans have access to services that are reasonably comparable to those available to their urban and suburban neighbors. And in response to the concerns about flexibility that you raise in your letter, the Order extends the term of support for price cap carriers that accept the state-level commitment and gives those price cap carriers more flexibility in serving those areas.

These actions represent a critical step in our continued effort to reform and modernize the universal service high-cost program – as well as other components of the Universal Service Fund – to ensure that all Americans have access to robust voice and broadband services.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler".

Tom Wheeler