

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Connect America Fund)	WC Docket No. 10-90
)	
Petition of USTelecom For Forbearance Pursuant to 47 U.S.C. §160(c) From ILEC Regulatory Obligations)	WC Docket No. 14-192
)	
Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization)	WC Docket No. 11-42
)	
Telecommunications Carriers Eligible for Universal Service Support)	WC Docket No. 09-197
)	

**REPLY COMMENTS OF
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE UTILITY CONSUMER
ADVOCATES ON REQUEST
TO REFRESH THE RECORD**

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I. INTRODUCTION AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On July 23, 2015, the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) released a Public Notice which in part invites public comment from interested parties "to refresh the record on issues raised in various proceedings related to ETC designations and obligations in areas served by price cap carriers."¹ The WCB identifies in the PN a number of proposed rulemaking issues, requests for relief, and recent FCC decisions that have or may impact upon the obligations of price-cap carriers as eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs). As the PN notes, the FCC has solicited comments in recent years regarding whether and to what extent an ETC's service obligations might be reduced "while avoiding consumer disruption in access to communications services" as high cost universal service funding shifts to new, more targeted mechanisms.² The United States Telecom Association's (USTelcom's) October 2014 Forbearance Petition included a request that the FCC forbear from the enforcement of Section 214(e) where a price cap carrier receives no high-cost support.³ The Commission's Lifeline Reform Second FNPRM also sought

¹ Public Notice, *Wireline Competition Bureau Releases List of Census Blocks Where Price Cap Carriers Still Have High Cost Voice Obligations & Seeks to Refresh the Record on Pending Issues Regarding Eligible Telecommunications Carrier Designations and Obligations*, WC Docket Nos. 10-90, 14-192, 11-42, and 09-197 (rel. July 23, 2015), 80 Fed.Reg. 45916 (Aug. 3, 2015)(footnotes omitted). The comment and reply comment period was revised. See Public Notice, *Certain Databases Will Be Unavailable and Filing Deadlines Will Be Extended*, DA-15-940 (rel. Aug. 20, 2015).

² PN, citing Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Report and Order, 29 FCC Rcd 15644 (2014)(Dec. 2014 CAF II Order).

³ PN, ¶ 4. The USTelcom Petition's Category 4 requests forbearance from:

All remaining 47 U.S.C. § 214(e) obligations where a price cap carrier does not receive High Cost Universal Service Support, including 47 C.F.R. §54.201(d). And, the Commission's determination that an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier is required to provide the "supported" services throughout its service area regardless of whether such services are actually "supported" with high-cost funding throughout that area (47 U.S.C. § 214(e); 47 C.F.R. § 54.201(d))."

comments on proposals for ETC relief from Lifeline obligations.⁴ Through the PN, the FCC seeks “to refresh the record on the issues that remain pending and how the actions already taken in the *December 2014 Connect America Order* might affect the Commission’s analysis with respect to these pending issues in several open dockets...”⁵

AT&T, USTelecom, and CenturyLink (collectively, the “commenting carriers”) filed comments on September 9, 2015 in response to the PN. AT&T states that the record is sufficiently developed to support grant of forbearance as requested in the USTelecom Petition and additional relief regarding the obligation to offer Lifeline service.⁶ USTelecom reiterates its request that the FCC eliminate “ETC service obligations and designations where a price cap carrier receives no high-cost support and de-link[] Lifeline from ETC designations.”⁷ CenturyLink asks the FCC to “acknowledge the irrefutable: that wireless voice services are an effective competitive alternative to wireline voice service...”⁸

The National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA)⁹ offers these brief reply comments in opposition to the refresh the record comments by

⁴ PN, ¶ 4. See *Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization*, WC Docket No. 11-42 et al., Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking et al., FCC 15-7, ¶¶ 125-26 (June 22, 2015)(Lifeline Second FNPRM).

⁵ PN, ¶ 5.

⁶ AT&T Sept. 2015 Comments at 1-6.

⁷ USTelecom Sept. 2015 Comments at 3.

⁸ *Id.* at 3.

⁹ NASUCA is a voluntary association of 44 consumer advocate offices in 41 states and the District of Columbia and additional associate members, incorporated in Florida as a non-profit corporation. NASUCA’s members are designated by laws of their respective jurisdictions to represent the interests of utility consumers before state and federal regulators and in the courts. Members operate independently from state utility commissions as advocates for utility ratepayers. Some NASUCA member offices are separately established advocate organizations while others are divisions of larger state agencies (e.g., the state Attorney General’s office). NASUCA’s associate and affiliate members also serve utility consumers but are not created by state law or do not have statewide authority. Some NASUCA member offices

AT&T, CenturyLink, and USTelecom, as well as comments filed by Verizon in the Lifeline Reform Second FNPRM. Through a long string of comments, NASUCA has affirmed that incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) designated as ETCs play an important role in the promotion and provision of universal service. NASUCA may file Reply Comments in the open Lifeline FNPRM proceeding that also address ETC designation, universal service obligations, and related issues covered by the USTelecom Petition and other matters within the scope of the July 2015 Public Notice.

As set forth in NASUCA resolutions¹⁰ and NASUCA comments, ILECs where designated as ETCs serve an important role in the promotion and provision of universal service.¹¹ The FCC should not forbear from the enforcement of the Section 214 and 254

advocate in states whose respective state commissions do not have jurisdiction over certain telecommunications issues.

¹⁰ NASUCA Resolution 2014-05, *Calling for Policies that Bring Reasonable Rates, Reliable and High Quality Service, Competition and Consumer Protection to All Customers of Telephone and Broadband Services*, (Nov. 18, 2014); NASUCA Resolution No. 2012-02, *Urging the FCC to Retain “Legacy” Regulations and Affirm State Authority to Enact and Enforce COLR and ETC Obligations* (June 24, 2012); NASUCA Resolution No. 2012-01, *Retention of Traditional Regulatory Oversight of all Voice Telephone Services* (June 24, 2012).

¹¹ AT&T and other incumbent local exchange carriers have proposed that their ETC obligations be eliminated in a number of other proceedings, including the “ABC Plan” and the Lifeline Reform docket.. These NASUCA reply comments, in this “refresh the record” phase, are consistent with the NASUCA comments filed in reply to the USTelecom Petition and related proceedings

See e.g., In the Matter of the Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90, et al, NASUCA Reply Comments at 17, 23-25 (filed May 23, 2011) (NASUCA opposed AT&T’s proposal that an ETC only have an obligation to serve in areas funded with high cost support. “AT&T’s proposal would place the fulfillment of universal service objectives on shifting sands” and “open the door to undesirable gaming of universal service support.”) (NASUCA May 2011 Reply Comments); NASUCA Comments re ABC Plan at 6-8, 26-28, 85 (Aug. 24, 2011) (“The continued provision of affordable, reliable basic telephone service is a matter of public health and safety. Any action taken by the FCC to ‘reform’ universal service must not damage the viability of basic telephone service. Taking high cost funding used to support voice telephone service, shifting it to broadband and then finding that the recipients of the funding were not obligated to provide voice would cause irreparable harm.”); Comments of NASUCA, Maine Office of Public Advocate, New Jersey Division of Rate Counsel, and The Utility Reform Network at 57-58 (Consumer Advocates opposed any relaxation of the voice service obligations of ILEC ETCs tied to a reduction in universal service support, where the ILEC ETC may decline support)(NASUCA Jan. 2012 Comments); NASUCA Reply Comments at 2-6 (Feb. 16, 2012).

See also, USTelecom Petition for Forbearance, WC Docket No. 14-192, NASUCA Comments at 1-21 (Dec. 5, 2014) (NASUCA Dec. 2014 Comments); NASUCA Corrected Reply Comments (Dec. 23, 2014).

ETC obligations of price cap carriers covered by the USTelecom Petition, including from the obligation to offer Lifeline service, beyond the limited relief already granted.¹²

II. REPLY COMMENTS

A. The Federal Communications Commission Should Not Grant Forbearance As Requested By The USTelecom Petition And Commenting Carriers

The commenting carriers assert that price cap carriers should have no federal universal obligation to continue providing voice service in costly-to-serve areas and that low income consumers who find the price cap carrier's local service unaffordable should switch to wireless Lifeline service. The price cap carriers other than Verizon have, in fact, accepted CAF II funding in their states,¹³ CAF II funding was available only for high-cost areas, the precise areas that AT&T and CenturyLink are complaining about having to serve.¹⁴

USTelecom and the other commenting carriers ask the FCC to forbear from enforcement of Section 214(e) so that the price cap carriers need not apply to the individual state commissions that granted such ETC designations in the first place and would preside over any Section 214(e)(4) relinquishment proceeding. USTelecom states

See, also Lifeline Reform, WC Docket No. 11-42, NASUCA Comments at 3, 5, 21-23 (Apr. 2, 2012)(Opposing AT&T's request to be relieved of Lifeline ETC obligations as inconsistent with Sections 214(e) and 254.); NASUCA Reply Comments at 9-11 (May 1, 2012); NASUCA Comments at 23-27 (Aug. 31, 2015).

¹² 47 U.S.C. §§ 214(e), 254(c). In the Dec. 2014 CAF II Order, the FCC granted limited forbearance to price cap carriers in specific geographic areas from "a federal high-cost requirement that price cap carriers offer voice telephony service throughout their service areas pursuant to Section 214(e)(1)(A)...." CAF II Order, ¶ 51. The FCC affirmed that "[t]hey remain obligated however, to maintain existing voice service unless and until they receive authority under section 214(a) to discontinue that service. They also will remain subject to the obligation to offer Lifeline service to qualifying low-income households throughout their service territory." Id. (citations, footnotes omitted).

¹³ See <https://www.fcc.gov/document/carriers-accept-over-15-b-support-expand-rural-broadband>.

¹⁴ If Verizon independently seeks forbearance, it should file a separate petition.

such relief is necessary to “ensure that states could not use the ETC designation to impose state-specific unfunded obligations on price cap carriers....”¹⁵ without giving a single example. The end result would be that such price cap carriers would be ETCs in name only, with obligations tied only to the receipt of federal high-cost universal service support.¹⁶

The refreshed record concerning USTelecom Petition’s Category 4 request does not support a grant of forbearance to permit price cap carriers to make business decisions which are at odds with Section 254 universal service goals. As set forth in NASUCA’s comments and reply comments, these ETC obligations are the foundation of universal service and such obligations benefit the price cap carriers’ customers and all consumers who may communicate with them. The designation by a state commission with jurisdiction or by the FCC, of a price cap carrier as an ETC imposes an obligation to comply with Sections 254 and 214 and related universal service regulations, throughout the ETC’s study area. Under Sections 214 and 254, an ETC may be eligible for federal universal service support; however, the ETC does not have a right to receive universal service fund support if the FCC so determines.¹⁷ The requesting price cap carriers ask the

¹⁵ Id. at 4.

¹⁶ USTelecom’s comments request that the FCC grant forbearance from “ETC designations,” language which is different from the USTelecom Petition’s Category 4 request for relief and beyond the FCC’s authority. See USTelecom Comments at 3 (“[T]he Commission should continue its ETC reforms ... eliminating ETC service obligations *and designations*....”)(emphasis added).

¹⁷ NASUCA Dec. 5, 2014 Comments at 9-10, 16; see also NASUCA Reply Comments at 30 on the CAF NPRM (Aug. 11, 2010). See Connect America Fund , WC Docket No. 10-90 et al., Report and Order, 26 FCC Rcd 17663, ¶ 318 (2011)(CAF I), aff’d 753 F.3d 1015 (10th Cir. 2014) (USF/ICC Transformation Order)(subsequent history omitted). The 10th Circuit upheld the FCC’s determination that designation as an ETC makes a carrier eligible for Section 254 universal service support, but does not guarantee receipt of support:

...as the language of § 214(e)(1) makes clear, “[a] common carrier designated as an eligible telecommunications carrier under paragraph (2), (3), or (6) shall be eligible to receive universal service support in accordance with section 254 [47 USCS § 254].” 47 U.S.C. § 214(e) (emphasis added). Had Congress intended designated ETCs to

FCC to turn these provisions upside down and determine that, notwithstanding their designation as ETCs, they may be relieved of their universal service obligations in those areas where they may not receive CAF support and where they do not want Lifeline customers, even with federal support. USTelecom states that “carriers should be relieved automatically from Lifeline obligations in such areas where there is at least one other Lifeline provider” rather than resorting to a Section 214(e)(4) relinquishment process.¹⁸

The FCC should not employ forbearance as a means to hollow out the ETC obligations of such price cap carriers.¹⁹ As ETCs, the price cap carriers should promote universal service through the offering of both ubiquitously available voice service and service made more affordable for eligible consumers through Lifeline. The USTelecom Petition forbearance request fails the Section 160(a)(3) public interest test, the Section 160(a)(2) protection of consumers test, and the Section 160(a)(1) just and reasonable rates test, standards that are conjunctive and overlap.²⁰

NASUCA’s concern that USTelecom has not provided a traditional market power analysis for each of the carriers covered by the forbearance request still holds.²¹ The Michigan Public Service Commission agreed with NASUCA that wireless and voice-over-internet-protocol (VOIP) service are not functional equivalents for wireline basic

automatically receive USF funds, it could and should have omitted the phrase “be eligible to” from the language of § 214(e)(1).
USF/ICC Transformation Order, 753 F.3d at 1066-67.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 5.

¹⁹ See NASUCA Jan. 2012 Comments at 58 (Consumer Advocates opposed the FCC’s suggestion to grant forbearance on a case-by-case basis, as a process “inadequate because it fails to properly balance federal and state roles.”)

²⁰ NASUCA Dec. 5, 2014 Comments at 4-16, citing 47 USC § 160(a)(1), (2), (3). See also Pa PUC Dec. 22, 2014 Reply Comments at

²¹ NASUCA Dec. 5, 2014 Comments at 4-8.

service.²² The Pennsylvania PUC also agreed that USTelecom has not made a prima facie case for forbearance as to each price cap carrier.²³

Indeed, the individual state information presented by AT&T²⁴ is better suited to a state level Section 214(e)(4) relinquishment request than a sweeping federal forbearance order.²⁵ An ETC's compliance with the Section 214(e)(4) process protects the public interest by allowing the state that granted the original ETC designation, or the FCC in the absence of state jurisdiction, to ensure that the ETC's obligations that would be relinquished are taken up by a replacement ETC.²⁶ NASUCA and the Michigan PSC rejected USTelecom's position that the marketplace will protect consumers in areas where the price cap carrier does not receive CAF support and does not have ETC obligations.²⁷ The Michigan PSC also agreed with NASUCA that the presence of an ETC subject to the Section 214(e) obligations to offer voice service throughout its study area should be preserved to protect consumers.²⁸

²² Mich. PSC Dec. 22, 2014 Reply Comments at 5.

²³ Pa PUC Dec. 22, 2014 Reply Comments at 3: "The PaPUC agrees with the assertion of the opposing commentators that USTelecom has not presented a prima facie case for the FCC to grant forbearance because the Petition lacks a traditional market power analysis and has not demonstrated the emergence of sufficient competition in any specific geographic or relevant product markets. See also ACA Comments at 2; XO Comments at 2; NASUCA Comments at 5-9; COMPTTEL Comments at 3-5."

²⁴ See AT&T Sept. 9, 2015 Comments and attachments. The fact that Section 214(e)(4) does not specify a deadline for state resolution of a relinquishment request is not a statutory flaw that justifies a fix through forbearance. Section 214(e)(4) allows states to address the unique circumstances of each Section 214(e)(4) application to relinquish an ETC designation.

²⁵ For example, a showing of the percentage of wireless-only households alone is not sufficient to demonstrate a lack of market power in the residential wireline market. NASUCA Dec. 5, 2014 Comments at 7-8 (citations omitted).

²⁶ *Id.* at 9-14. Section 214(e)(4) establishes a framework for an ETC to relinquish its ETC designation and "cease providing universal service in an area served by more than one eligible telecommunications carrier," but first the state commission or FCC with jurisdiction "shall require the remaining eligible telecommunications carrier or carriers to ensure that all customers served by the relinquishing carrier will continue to be served ..." 47 USC § 214(e)(4).

²⁷ Mich. PSC Dec. 22, 2014 Reply Comments at 7.

²⁸ *Id.* at 5-8.

The Pennsylvania PUC determined that the broad sweep of USTelecom’s forbearance request, if granted, would create an apparent conflict “with the authority of State commissions to designate ETCs and to enforce the COLR obligations of incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) that are jointly administered by the FCC and State public utility commissions under independent state law.”²⁹ Yet, the USTelecom Comments ask the FCC to continue its ETC reforms including “eliminating ETC service obligations *and designations*”³⁰ In the recent Lifeline Reform Second FNPRM, the FCC has acknowledged that pursuant to Section 214(e)(2), states may have their own standards and processes for matters related to ETC designation, different from those which the FCC may apply when the FCC is the designating agency pursuant to Section 214(e)(6).³¹ The Section 214(e)(2) assignment of primary authority to states in ETC designation matters is not subject to FCC enforcement and so should not be the subject of an FCC grant of forbearance.

In the dynamic between regulators, price cap carriers, and consumers in price cap carrier study areas, a grant of forbearance from enforcement of the price cap carrier’s ETC obligations under Section 214 and 254 would only benefit the price cap carriers. Consumers would not benefit because price cap carriers might claim federal permission to not offer voice service. Consumers in other areas would be unable to communicate with the consumers who are selectively unserved by the price cap carrier under a federal

²⁹ PaPUC Reply Comments at 4-6. “Forbearance seemingly conflicts with the authority of State commissions to designate ETCs and to enforce the COLR obligations of incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) that are jointly administered by the FCC and State public utility commissions under independent state law. Thus, federal forbearance from Section 214(e) obligations, if approved, would unlawfully preempt the COLR obligations of the ‘price cap’ ILEC members of USTelecom, which is under the operation of independent State laws and regulations.” See also NASUCA Dec. 5, 2014 Comments at 9-16.

³⁰ USTelecom Comments at 3 (emphasis added).

³¹ Lifeline Reform Second FNPRM, ¶¶ 124, 185.

grant of forbearance. The Section 214(e)(4) framework for relinquishment of ETC obligations in a specific study area, to be ruled upon by the state or the FCC, that designated the price cap carrier as an ETC, would not apply under a grant of forbearance as envisioned by the commenting carriers. The FCC should deny the request by USTelecom and supporting price cap carriers for forbearance from enforcement of Section 214, including Subpart (e)(4). To do otherwise would allow the price cap carriers to pit federal forbearance against state carrier-of-last-resort and consumer protection requirements.³²

CenturyLink argues that grant of the USTelecom Petition is overdue and necessary to spare ILECs from spending time and resources on regulatory requirements “related to increasingly underutilized and obsolete networks and services...”³³ According to CenturyLink, grant of the entirety of the USTelecom Petition will provide the public with the benefit of next-generation networks for IP-based services.³⁴ However, CenturyLink provides no estimates of the relative costs of these regulations, the benefits to customers from the regulations, or the benefits of the “next-generation networks” to which the ETC obligations arguably do not apply.

³² See NASUCA Jan. 2012 Comments at 57 (“ETC obligations are important to protect consumers and include consumer protection and service quality standards as well as requirements regarding the provision of service during emergencies. States have been at the forefront of enforcing these obligations. There is no justification for tying the CAF to preemption of state authority or to elimination of public interest obligations such as carrier of last resort obligations.”).

³³ CenturyLink Sept. 2015 Comments at 1-2.

³⁴ Id. at 5-6.

B. The FCC Should Not Forbear From Enforcement Of The Obligations Of ILEC ETCs To Offer Lifeline Support To Eligible Consumers Throughout Their Study Area Or Otherwise De-Link Such Lifeline Obligations

AT&T, USTelecom, and other supporting carriers request that the FCC relieve them of their obligations as ETCs to make voice service more affordable for Lifeline qualified consumers through the provision of Lifeline service. USTelecom states that “carriers should be relieved automatically from Lifeline obligations in such areas where there is at least one other Lifeline provider” rather than resorting to a Section 214(e)(4) relinquishment process.³⁵

The FCC should deny such ILEC requests for forbearance or other alternative request which would allow ILECs to provide voice service only where the ILEC chooses and without consideration for the affordability of such voice service and universal service principles. The ILECs have not presented a serious, factually-supported analysis of the Section 160(a) forbearance review standards, including no proof that enforcement of the obligation to offer Lifeline service is not necessary to ensure just and reasonable low-income rates, not necessary for the protection of consumers, and not necessary for the public interest.³⁶ The ILECs’ proposal to contract the availability and variety of Lifeline services available to consumers in their ETC study areas is in direct conflict with the Lifeline Reform Second FNPRM’s stated interest in increasing the availability and variety of robust Lifeline service offerings from a variety of providers.³⁷ In

³⁵ Id. at 5.

³⁶ 47 USC § 160(a)(1), (2), (3), (b).

³⁷ Lifeline Reform Second FNPRM, ¶ 14 (“First, we propose to establish minimum service levels for voice and broadband Lifeline service to ensure value for our USF dollars and more robust services for low-income Americans consistent with our obligations in section 254....”); ¶ 121 (FCC intention to “increase

evaluating whether to grant forbearance of the ILECs' Section 251 obligation to offer Lifeline service at wholesale, the FCC determined that forbearance was in the public interest based in part on the collective presence of the ILEC ETCs, wireline competitive ETCs utilizing means other than Lifeline resale to serve their subscribers, and wireless ETCs, as offering Lifeline consumers significant competitive choice.³⁸

Even though all ETCs offer Lifeline service based on the same level of federal support, there can be significant variations in the availability, quality, and other characteristics of such supported services. For example, as a wireless Lifeline ETC, AT&T cautions that the availability of mobile Lifeline service is subject to limitations and is not guaranteed.³⁹ Indeed, almost all wireless Lifeline plans are limited to a certain number of minutes,⁴⁰ in contrast to wireline Lifeline with its unlimited usage. Simply because some Lifeline eligible consumers have opted for wireless Lifeline service does not provide justification that such wireless Lifeline service is available and of comparable quality to wireline Lifeline service

competition and innovation in the Lifeline marketplace[,] ... facilitate broader participation in the Lifeline program and encourage competition with most robust service offerings in the Lifeline market.”)

³⁸ Id., ¶¶ 249-256.

³⁹ For example, AT&T's brochure for wireless Lifeline service in Washington state provides a coverage map and the caution:

Please review your coverage map for areas included or excluded in your plan. Map depicts an approximation of outdoor coverage. Map may include areas served by unaffiliated carriers and may depict their licensed area rather than an approximation of the coverage there. Actual coverage area may differ substantially from the graphics shown in the map, and coverage may be affected by such things as terrain, weather, foliage, buildings and other construction, signal strength, customer equipment and other factors. AT&T does not guarantee coverage.

See http://www.att.com/shopcms/media/att/2013/shop/wireless/documents/Washington_Brochure.pdf (last visited 9/23/2015).

⁴⁰ See Lifeline Reform Second FNPRM, ¶ 16.

offered by the ILEC ETCs. Nor have these ILECs addressed the merits of postpaid wireline Lifeline service relative to prepaid wireless Lifeline service. Clearly, postpaid wireline service offers continuity of service, even as a household's eligibility for Lifeline may end. If a consumer's circumstances improve and he/she no longer qualifies for Lifeline service, that is a positive development for the household and the public. The household that received postpaid wireline Lifeline service can continue to receive wireline voice service with the same telephone number, simply at the higher, non-Lifeline retail price. In contrast, if a household receiving prepaid wireless Lifeline service is no longer eligible, the consumer must proactively arrange for new non-Lifeline service to preserve voice service and the continued use of the telephone number. An interruption in voice service harms the consumer and federal universal service goals. NASUCA supports the FCC's goal to provide low income consumers with more variety of Lifeline service offerings from a variety of providers.

For the reasons stated in NASUCA's comments and expected Reply Comments in the Lifeline Reform Second FNRPM, the FCC should deny the request of USTelecom and other commenting carriers for forbearance or other relief from their ETC obligations to offer Lifeline service to promote universal service and the availability of affordable supported services.

III. CONCLUSION

NASUCA appreciates this opportunity to reply to the comments filed by USTelecom and others in response to the Public Notice's request to refresh the record on the question of the future ETC obligations of price cap ETCs. NASUCA's comments on these issues, in the USTelecom Petition and related proceedings, demonstrate that USTelecom and supporting carriers have not supported their request for forbearance. To preserve and promote universal service, including the availability of Lifeline service from ILEC ETCs, the FCC must deny these forbearance requests.

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