

February 25, 2016

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

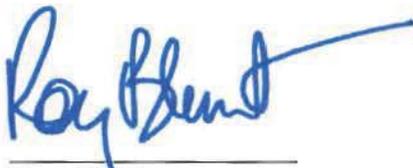
Dear Chairman Wheeler:

As Members of the Senate Commerce Committee who represent Missouri, predominantly a rural state, we write to emphasize the importance of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) final rules for the reverse auction of remaining funds available under Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF II). It is critically important to us that our rural constituents have the same access to fiber optics and other advanced broadband networks as their urban counterparts.

We understand the FCC is considering rules for the reverse auction of remaining CAF II funds, and there is roughly \$400 million available over the next ten years to bring broadband to unserved parts of Missouri. It is paramount this funding be reserved solely for Missouri. Fiber optics and other advanced technologies are essential to attracting and retaining business in rural areas, and they provide numerous benefits including educational opportunities for schools and libraries, precision agriculture for farmers, and improved standards of living through telehealth applications. We urge the Commission to adopt rules for the reverse auction that enable the deployment of fiber optics and other advanced networks to the greatest number of unserved households, businesses, and farms possible.

Rural areas need access to comparable broadband service as those deployed in urban areas. We are steadfast in our commitment to Missouri, and recognize the economic benefits from CAF II in our state if the reverse auction is implemented responsibly. We strongly urge the Commission to meet its obligation to close the rural-urban divide, and to seize the reverse auction as an opportunity to do so.

Sincerely,



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Claire McCaskill
United States Senator



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

March 1, 2016

The Honorable Claire McCaskill
United States Senate
730 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator McCaskill:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to adopt rules for the Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II reverse auction that enable the deployment of fiber optics and other advanced networks to the greatest number of unserved households, businesses, and farms possible. 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 share your interest in bridging the rural digital divide in our country. The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure, as you emphasize, that consumers and businesses in rural America have the same opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the 21st century economy. The Commission is 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 while providing a climate for increased broadband expansion, all within the confines of the Connect America Fund's budget.

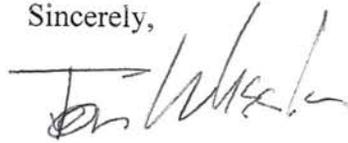
Last September, I circulated an Order for the consideration of my fellow Commissioners that would address the framework for the CAF Phase II competitive bidding process. In December, I circulated an updated draft Order that addressed concerns raised by other commissioner offices. I remain committed to completing the CAF Phase II auction framework as expeditiously as possible, and I will continue to work with my colleagues to resolve this important matter promptly.

One of the primary policy goals for this competitive bidding process is to ensure widespread participation from all providers that can deliver a high-quality service. Simply put, more competition between providers means that finite universal service funding will be used efficiently to deliver the best possible solutions. As the Commission moves forward with finalizing the structure of the CAF Phase II reverse auction, we will take into consideration the issues and concerns presented by all stakeholders and give full attention to the best ways to ensure that rural communities, including those in Missouri, have access to robust and reliable broadband service.

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

Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

March 1, 2016

The Honorable Roy Blunt
United States Senate
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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Tom Wheeler