



# City of Tonasket

P.O. Box 487 ♦ Tonasket, WA 98855

509 / 486-2132 ♦ Fax 486-1831  
E-Mail: tonasket@nvinet.com

May 11, 2016

Chairman Tom Wheeler  
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn  
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel  
Commissioner Ajit Pai  
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90

Dear Chairman Wheeler and Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai, and O'Rielly:

I am the Mayor in Tonasket, Washington, and am writing you to emphasize the importance of continuing to fund voice services for the most rural parts of our state. The State of Washington, like many states, has some very rural and remote areas with challenging terrains. Landline voice services remain the primary method, and quite often, the ONLY method of communications for these areas and remain vital for emergency services, particularly before, during, and in the aftermath of extreme weather events and natural disasters.

While extreme weather events can happen anywhere, the rural and remote residents of Washington experience some of the most extreme weather events, which are made even more challenging by the distance of residents from emergency services. To take just a few recent examples in Washington, we have experienced very large forest fires, flooding, and mudslides in the past few years. For example, in 2015, Washington had the largest forest fire in state history, raging through nearly 400 square miles of wilderness, family farms, homesteads, and destroying some 300 homes, with President Obama declaring a state of emergency for our area.

Landline telephone service was critical for emergency services, and it was vital to restore communications as quickly as possible if they were knocked out. Restoring landline service is especially important in these very rural areas because there is frequently no wireless services, and our residents rely on telephone as the primary link to emergency services. First responders rely on maintaining that connection during emergencies and ensuring that communications are restored as quickly as possible if a weather event takes down communications.

Telephone service in remote areas is also particularly important due to reverse 911. Reverse 911 (also called emergency telephone notification) allows first responders to call residents in advance of and during natural disasters to give an early warning and communicate updates. For example, reverse 911 is especially useful with notifications during forest fires because it enables emergency responders to nearly instantaneously warn residents to evacuate if they may be in the path of a fire, which can change direction at a moment's notice. In my county, Okanogan County, our Emergency Management department has set up a multi-level contact system. During the fires last year, the only mode of communication was via Frontier DSL and Frontier Voice services. Without the ability to warn people with the copper lines providing the only link of communications, many people would have had more severe damages that could have otherwise been avoided.

Landline voice service remains too important of a service to emergency services in rural and remote locations to put at risk through a failure to provide adequate funding. Accordingly, I would urge the Commission to take into account the importance of emergency services, including 911 and reverse 911, in ensuring that Washington's most rural residents can continue to access voice services. Any assistance in this effort to help us would be immensely important to me, and I urge you to contact me personally if I can be of any more assistance with testimony or further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Plumb', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Patrick Plumb, Mayor  
City of Tonasket, WA