



Snohomish County

Executive

Dave Somers
County Executive

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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 County Executive for Snohomish County, Washington, and am writing to you to emphasize the importance of continuing to fund voices services for the most rural parts of our state. The State of Washington, like many states, have some very rural and remote areas with challenging terrains. Landline voice services remain the primary method of communications for these areas and remain vital for emergency services, particularly before, during, and in the aftermath of extreme weather events.

While extreme weather events can happen anywhere, the rural and remote residents of Washington experience some of the most extreme weather events, which is 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 2014, a mudslide my County engulfed a rural neighborhood, covering approximately 1 square mile and killing 43 people.

In all of these kinds of events, landline telephone service is critical for emergency services, and it is vital to restore communications as quickly as possible if they are 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.

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, we 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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Somers", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dave Somers
Snohomish County Executive