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STATE OF NEW MEXICO
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION — EDUCATION BUILDING
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786

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May 11, 1999

**CC Docket #96-45**

Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street TWB-204
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Secretary:

The Universal Service Fund, E-rate, has made and is making a tremendous impact on New Mexico schools and libraries. New Mexico is a relatively poor state with approximately 75% of public school students eligible for free and reduced lunch. In 1999, the New Mexico State Legislature allocated $4.4 million to public schools for their educational technology needs -- $14.08 per student. This amount has not been sufficient for schools to create the infrastructure needed for student to access the most up-to-date, richest information source available - the Internet. The federal Technology Literacy Challenge Fund has provided another $4.5 million over 2 years, and the state Computers in the Classroom has subsidized $1 million worth of computers. Together, these funding sources have made considerable impact in New Mexico's 89 schools districts. Now, with over $18 million in E-rate funding flowing to New Mexico schools and libraries -- nearly twice the funding of the last two years -- many schools will be able to provide their students with once impossible learning opportunities.

Many schools find themselves racing through their long-range technology plans with the infusion of E-rate funds. Las Vegas City Schools received $187,722. Their schools, so long unable to establish Internet connectivity due to poor infrastructure, will soon have every classroom wired and connected to the Internet through a local college. Their students, so far from large city resources, will have access to the entire world. Other schools, like Clayton, are rural, agricultural communities and are nearly at full bonding capacity. Clayton has fewer than 800 students in the entire district. They simply cannot raise the funds necessary to buy the equipment, establish the infrastructure, and create the Internet connectivity needed to give their students the research and information capabilities of the World Wide Web. Amistad Elementary, Clayton's smallest school with only 15 students, will soon have resources identical to New Mexico's largest schools, some of which have over 2000 students. These two examples demonstrate the typical effect that the Universal Service Fund is having on New Mexico schools. As more funds flows to districts, every school will be able to tell its own success story.

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New Mexico schools have made tremendous strides in ensuring that increasing numbers of students have access to rich resources and learning environments and that classroom teachers and school administrators receive the necessary professional development to capitalize on the infrastructure. Given the potential impact of E-rate on New Mexico schools, your efforts to expand this program are appreciated.

Please let me know if the State Department of Education can provide additional information about the status of the E-rate in New Mexico.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL J. DAVIS
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

MJD/SAS/dcb

cc: Ms. Gloria Tristani, Commissioner
Dr. Kurt A. Steinhaus
Mr. Steven A. Sanchez