

WT Docket No 99-168

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United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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December 22, 1999

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

The Honorable William E. Kennard, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW, Room 8B-201
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Kennard:

We are writing to thank you for your efforts to bridge the digital divide in rural America, and to enlist your continued support as the Commission develops its plan for future spectrum auctions.

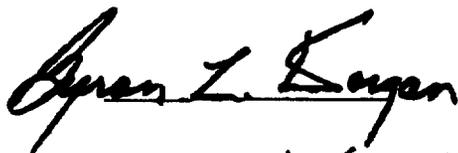
Securing access to broadband infrastructure and services for America's unserved and underserved citizens is one of the most critical responsibilities of the Commission and the Congress. This responsibility requires us to make the economic opportunities that accompany access to broadband Internet services available to all our citizens, regardless of their geographic location or social circumstances. You have demonstrated that you share our commitment to that goal. We applaud your many efforts to address these difficult access problems, and look forward to continuing the close working relationship we have enjoyed with the Commission in our mutual search for solutions.

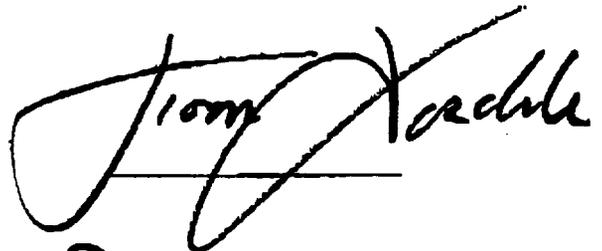
Accordingly, we write to express our desire that the Commission place the highest priority on the needs of rural Americans to gain equal access to broadband Internet services as it develops the "band plan" for the auction of spectrum that could prove particularly valuable in bridging the digital divide in rural America. Specifically, the spectrum allocated for the 746-764 and 776-794 MHz bands could play a crucial role in helping to close that divide. The Commission itself has recognized the unique value of this part of the spectrum for rural broadband applications.

We are aware of the difficult task the Commission has in balancing the twin imperatives of the Telecommunications Act of 1996: competition and universal service. While we recognize the expertise of the Commission in deciding upon this issue, we strongly encourage you to pay close attention to the needs of rural America as you make your spectrum auction decisions.

Thank you in advance for supporting our rural constituents.

Sincerely,









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cc: Commissioner Susan Ness
Commissioner Michael Powell
Commissioner Harold Furchtgott-Roth
Commissioner Gloria Tristani