

April 05, 2001

Magalie Roman Salas  
Commission's Secretary  
Office of the Secretary  
Federal Communication Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, D. C. 20554

Docket No. 96-45

Dear Ms. Salas,

The Board of Directors of the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce has voted to endorse and support the State of Alaska's petition to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regarding the E-rate waiver for the State of Alaska. This petition requests the FCC to allow rural Alaskans in villages which currently have no local dial-up access to the internet, use of telecommunication services currently provided to their schools and libraries through the federal E-rate program. Allowing this access will help Alaskans to close the digital divide that exists in Rural Alaska. This access is essential to Alaskans as they try to maintain their access to the rest of the world.

The Kodiak Chamber of Commerce is the economic development agency for both the City of Kodiak and the Kodiak Island Borough. As such, we firmly believe that access to the Internet is a critical issue to the future economic viability of the rural communities of Kodiak Island. With more than 1,000 people living in six isolated communities, we must ensure they have the ability to connect to the rest of the world via the Internet. Equal access at a reasonable cost regardless of where they live is something that residents of the "lower 48" take for granted. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Alaska. Many communities in Alaska, by virtue of their geographic location and remoteness, are not able to make this connection.

The proposal by the State of Alaska would only be available to those communities that do not have toll-free or local dial up Internet access. This access to the Internet would be restricted to those hours when the schools or libraries are not using the service. This E-rate program would provide the monies necessary to ensure that the schools and libraries are able to defray the costs associated with providing Internet to those facilities.

The Board of Directors of the Kodiak Chamber of Commerce strongly urges you to support the petition as submitted by the State of Alaska. Your thoughtful attention and careful consideration of this petition request is sincerely appreciated.

Yours in economic prosperity,

Darren J. Franz  
President