

Bell companies operate an "essential facility", and should have to accommodate other ISP firms that wish to purchase access from them. This wholesale provisioning will stimulate competition and be of benefit to the consumers. To not do so would cripple the '96 Telecom Act. Chairman Powell: Please do not favor large providers, that have historically ignored the needs of rural areas, at the expense of competition and the small businesses of our country.

Internet access is essential to economic growth in rural areas. The proposed FCC actions would reduce competition, innovation, and thus access in Southwest Virginia. I have written to Rep. Rick Boucher, Member of Congress and a member of the Energy and Commerce subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet explaining that the proposed actions will reduce Internet access and economic growth in his district.