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**Organizations Concerned  
about  
Rural Education**

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President.....Dale Lestina  
Vice President.....Kari Arfstrom  
Secretary-Treasurer..Christopher Schepis  
Trustees....Steve Kohn, Randy Moody  
Executive Director....Charles Conrad

**Member Organizations**

- American Association of School Administrators
- American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- American Library Association
- Communicating for Agriculture
- Forest Counties School Coalition
- M W Financial, Inc.
- National Association of Counties
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Federally Impacted Schools
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Association of State Boards of Education
- National Education Association
- National Education Knowledge Industry Association
- National Farmers Union
- National Grange
- National Indian School Boards Association
- National Rural Education Association
- National Rural Electric Cooperative Association
- National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative
- National School Boards Association
- North Country Education Foundation of New Hampshire
- Northpoint Technology, Ltd.
- Public Education Network
- Rebuild America's Schools
- Rural School and Community Trust
- Rural Telephone Finance Cooperative
- Small School Districts' Association
- Verizon Communications

August 30, 2004

**ORIGINAL**

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SEP - 3 2004  
FCC - MAILROOM

The Honorable Michael K. Powell, Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: CC Dkt. No. 01-338,

Ex Parte Filing

Dear Chairman Powell:

On behalf of Organizations Concerned about Rural Education (OCRE), we urge the FCC to advance its broadband agenda by providing relief from Section 271 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to Verizon Communications for broadband internet services as requested in the above cited proceeding.

OCRE is a coalition of 28 national organizations that supports efforts to imrove the public schools in rural America. Its member organizations advocate the u se of modern communications technology to overcome the distances and lack of resources that often handicap the students in rural and small town schools. Technology plays an important role in bringing quality education to rural students.

While the FCC is considering a national broadband policy, we write to support Verizon Communications' request for forbearance from Section 271. Forbearance will enable the company to build its fiber network so that it can continue to offer services and provide additional telecommunications options for consumers. Many broadband applications, including real-time video relay interpreting, telemedicine, and contemporaneous monitoring, have the potential to dramatically improve the lives of Americans living in rural areas. Through its fiber network, we believe Verizon will be a welcome competitor to cable operators, which could result in

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better service quality, innovative packages, and competitive prices, making these services accessible for rural communities.

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to comment on this important issue. The decisions you make regarding the deployment of broadband will have a profound impact on all consumers. We are confident that you will act in a quick and decisive manner so that companies like Verizon will be encouraged to invest in 21<sup>st</sup> century communications technology in rural America.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dale Lestina". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Sincerely yours," text.

Dale Lestina  
President