



STATE OF MAINE
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
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JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
GOVERNOR

HAND DELIVERY

John Muleta, Chief
Wireless Telecommunications Bureau
Federal Communications Commission
Room TW-A325
445 12th St., S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Re: USF Support for Rural Maine Mobile Carriers

Dear Chief Muleta:

I am writing to you to underline the importance of maximizing Federal Universal Service Fund support for Maine's eligible mobile carriers, and to request that you take such steps as may be required to remove any barriers that may be impeding this funding.

The Maine State Police, Maine sheriffs in rural counties, and our local police are all severely hampered by the pervasive absence of mobile service in rural Maine. For example, when Maine law enforcement personnel are dispatched to handle a domestic violence complaint (our number one law enforcement issue), they are frequently unable to call ahead to determine whether someone in the house has a gun. Once at the scene, they are often unable to call for back-up assistance. Having mobile service available is therefore critical, in my judgment, to protect the safety of the public living in rural Maine as well as the law enforcement officers responsible for their safety.

Emergency services providers in rural areas are also stymied by the lack of mobile service. The surface area of our state is equal to the rest of New England put together. Since we cannot have a hospital in every town, we rely heavily on our "LifeFlight" helicopter service to get injured people from rural areas to our medical centers. In many of Maine's rural areas, the first responders to an auto accident, our emergency medical technicians, find that their cell phones will not work at the accident scene, making it impossible to summon helicopter transportation for injured parties in a timely fashion. Lack of mobile service in this case means an often life-threatening delay in the delivery of medical care to critically injured people.

Finally, the rural communities of my state face significant problems in trying to maintain their economic vitality. The natural resource-based industries that employed so many rural Maine citizens – our footwear, textile and forest products factories – are closing at an alarming rate, eliminating the jobs that kept these towns going. Replacing these high-paying



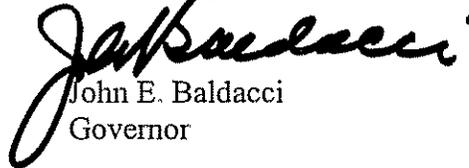
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jobs has proven to be very difficult. As a result, our young people are leaving rural Maine for better economic opportunities. Economic development officials from rural Maine tell me over and over again that businesspeople looking to locate a business in a rural Maine community often lose interest when they take out their cell phones and find that there is no mobile service in the area.

The 1996 Telecommunications Act promised that introducing competition to the telecommunications market would not result in the rural areas of our country becoming "telecommunications backwaters." I believe strongly that in this day and age, a community that lacks cell service is in fact a telecommunications backwater. Unless timely and adequate USF support can be made available to the USG-eligible mobile carriers serving my State's rural areas, we will continue to witness the steady decline of these wonderful communities. I urge you to act to free up any available USF support for Maine's eligible mobile carriers at the first opportunity.

Thanks you for considering this request, and please do not hesitate to contact my office should you have any questions.

Very truly yours,



John E. Baldacci
Governor