



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON
Commerce, Science, and Transportation

TED STEVENS, Chairman

DANIEL INOUYE, Co-Chairman

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Commerce Committee Co-Chairmen Stevens and Inouye Comment
on the FCC Decision to Require AT&T to Pay Into the Universal
Service Fund**

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Washington, D.C. – Senate Commerce Committee Co-Chairmen Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) and Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii) today welcomed the Federal Communications Commission's decision to require AT&T to pay \$160 million in fees owed to the Universal Service Fund.

"I am pleased that the FCC voted unanimously to protect the Universal Service Fund. This Fund is crucial in keeping rural America on the information highway and not on an exit ramp," said Stevens. "Chairman Michael Powell and the rest of the Commissioners should be commended for protecting rural America and the nation's schools, libraries, and health clinics. It is my understanding that the FCC will undertake a new rulemaking to consider how calling cards will be treated in the future. As this process goes forward, I urge the Commission to consider what can be done to keep calling cards costs low for those serving in our Armed Forces overseas."

Senator Inouye said, "While I agree with today's decision by the FCC requiring AT&T's contribution to the Universal Service Fund, I am concerned by reports that its further notice may unwittingly invite the creation of a 'loophole' that will allow future communications service providers to avoid their Universal Service obligations. The obligation to contribute to Universal Service should not hinge on whether the customer presses or does not press certain buttons to hear an advertisement. In addition, I agree with Senator Stevens that any additional costs should not fall on the men and women serving us overseas in our Armed Forces. I pledge to work with him to ensure that result."

The Universal Service Program assesses a small fee on all long distance calls to help offset the high cost of telephone service to rural America. In addition, the fund is used to bring the Internet to schools, libraries, and health facilities across the nation.

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