

I live in rural America because I like the quiet and the decrease in pollution. However, I also use my cell phone often. The coverage that I get is inadequate. I still have to maintain a land line because I get virtually no reception for my cell phone at my home. There are several places also that I travel where I have no reception or my call will be dropped. I look at the number of farmers who carry cell phones now. They can keep in contact with family, friends, and business needs. They can expedite time by being able to call for assistance whether it be them personally or a needed repair in the field. They can save much time, gas, and money because they can call from their location instead of having to go home and call from there.

I am a teacher and most of my students have cell phones. They too have the same experiences with calls. They are traveling home in the late evening from work or school events. If they break down or there is a problem, it is much nicer to be able to call for help rather than to have to walk to find someone down a dirt, gravel road. I have had students have reported being followed and because they could call the sheriff, they were safe because they did not stop. Those who were following were impersonating law enforcement officials.

On a more personal note. Twenty months ago we experienced a house fire. We could not use the land line. Our son did have a cell phone. He of course couldn't use it at our home but he could go out to the road and get enough reception to call in the 911 call on the fire. This allowed precious minutes to be saved. Because of this we did not have to lose everything.

It has not been too many years ago that the last of the party lines were eliminated in Missouri. Does the FCC see rural America as the stepchild. Without rural America none of us would be eating. We have all of the same communication needs as the big cities.

Please help improve the lives of rural Americans by protecting and expanding the Universal Service Fund (USF) for wireless providers. Wireless telecommunications is no longer a luxury in our society; it is a fundamental necessity for public health, safety and economic development.

Capping the fund will shut the door on rural America. Less USF support for rural wireless networks will leave us with poor coverage, dropped calls and dangerous dead zones. The urban/rural technology gap will only widen.

Rural America deserves the same cell phone service as our big cities. I urge you to expand – not cap – the USF. Please don't leave us behind.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Annetta Lasley

PS I would be happy to talk to you personally on this matter.