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July 25, 2007

The Honorable Jonathan S. Adelstein
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Commissioner Adelstein:

As the former Governor of South Dakota, I am well aware of the need for balanced development in all areas of our state. But a newly FCC-proposed cap would limit the wireless portion of the Universal Service Fund. I am against the cap and want to highlight why you must vote it out.

As you know, the Universal Service Fund was established to help develop the telephone infrastructure in rural America and low-income urban areas. However, since its inception in 1996, the fund has spent 11 out of every 12 dollars of its resources on landline development, leaving cellular phone users stranded by dropped calls and periodic dead zones.

Just like customer expect to receive the products they have paid for, phone users across America who all pay into the USF hoping that that surcharge would translate into more telecommunications options in rural areas, which was the purpose for which the Fund was created, the government has an obligation to deliver on that promise. However, while billions of dollars have been collected – a third of it from cell phone users – unreasonably high amounts of the Fund continue to be allocated in landline companies, a technology the demand for which is not rising nearly at the same rate as that of wireless service.

I am involved in real estate development in the western part of our state. I am trying to create a wireless network in the rural Black Hills region that will include internet and wifi services. There is no acceptable reason for Black Hills residents or other rural communities to go without dependable cellular access. These are serious issues that impact both businesses and emergency services. Businesses need reliable phone access or they will lose time and money, and in the case of first responders and EMS crews, dependable phone service is essential and can save lives.

I am a strong supporter of wireless development and against a cap on the wireless portion of the Universal Service Fund when that is precisely the last thing we need. I urge you to vote against the cap and support the development of cellular access across the country.

Sincerely,
Walter Miller
Walter Miller
Member

Mr. Walter D. Miller
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