

Gates County Board of Commissioners

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Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary

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October 29, 2008

The Honorable Kevin Martin  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Martin,

It has come to my attention that the Federal Communications Commission is considering a proposed order on intercarrier compensation and universal service that could dramatically alter the cost and availability of rural telecommunications and broadband in my state, and that the FCC vote is scheduled for November 4 - Election Day 2008.

Among other things, the proposal apparently includes consumer phone rate increases ranging from several dollars to almost \$10 a month, just to save urban-focused telecom providers nearly \$4 billion annually in access charges. This is somewhat alarming given the challenges that many of my constituents already face from a national credit crisis, increasing food and fuel prices and rising unemployment rates.

At the same time, the proposal would undercut broadband investment by eliminating billions of dollars in funding that rural providers use today to build and maintain broadband infrastructure, in rural America. In addition to putting the goal of universal broadband availability further away for many communities, such an approach could lead to additional unemployment and market instability in the telecommunications industry.

Given the gravity of these issues, I am disappointed that the actual order has not been made available for public comment, and that the FCC vote is scheduled on Election Day when members of Congress and their constituents are rightly focused on their civic duties.

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List A B C D E

The Honorable Kevin Martin  
Page 2

While I am aware that the Commission is under a court order to address one narrow issue – the intercarrier rate for calls to dial-up Internet service providers – I want to urge you in the strongest possible terms not to proceed with the other issues in the proposed order before putting it out for public comment. In this way, we can all learn about the merits and drawbacks of the proposal before it is too late.

Sincerely,



J. S. Pierce, Chairman  
Board of Commissioners

JSP/drh

cc: Commissioner Michael J. Copps  
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein  
Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate  
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell