

May 11, 2009

The Honorable Michael J. Copps
Acting Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

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Dear Acting Chairman Copps:

As you know, CenturyTel and Embarq have filed an application for the Federal Communications Commission to consent to their merger. I am familiar with both companies as providers of broadband and telecommunications services to hundreds of rural communities in Missouri.

The combined company will likely be one of many Missouri candidates vying to participate in the broadband stimulus programs of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) administered by NTIA and RUS. Given the timing of their merger, CenturyTel and Embarq say they will face a challenge applying for stimulus grants because they will need to merge two national applications, recalibrate overall capital levels, choose technologies and prioritize projects within the newly combined service areas. My hope is that this process will not overlap with the expected short window to respond to the Notices of Funding Availability (NOFA) from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) in a way that will impair them vis-à-vis other candidates.

While I take no position on the merits of the merger or of any individual broadband stimulus application, I believe Missourians will benefit if all broadband providers have the maximum opportunity to participate in the ARRA's economic recovery programs. I appreciate your expeditious consideration of the transaction once the record is complete and you have had sufficient time to evaluate it.

Sincerely,



CLAIRE MCCASKILL
United States Senator