

Tanana Chiefs Conference

Chief Peter John Tribal Building

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August 20, 2010

SUBREGIONS

UPPER KUSKOKWIM

McGrath
Medfra
Nikolai
Takatna
Telida

The Honorable Julius Genochoski, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

LOWER YUKON

Anvik
Graying
Holy Cross
Shageluk

RE: Tanana Chiefs Conference Response to WC Docket No. 02-60, Rural Health Care Support Mechanism

Dear Chairman Genochoski,

UPPER TANANA

Dot Lake
Eagle
Healy Lake
Northway
Tanacross
Teffin
Tok

In March 2005, Fairbanks, Alaska was technically no longer eligible for health care telecommunications subsidies due to a change in the definition of "rural". Fairbanks and many other communities in the United States were granted an exemption to the rule for three years. In 2008 the FCC extended the grandfather period, which is set to expire in June 2011. Tanana Chiefs Conference is grateful for the extensions and has been able to successfully leverage Universal Service Funding under the exemption to provision a critical communications link between Chief Andrew Isaac Health Clinic in Fairbanks and the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage, which is our next higher level of patient care and technical support.

YUKON FLATS

Arctic Village
Beaver
Birch Creek
Canyon Village
Chalkyitsik
Circle
Fort Yukon
Venetie

Although Fairbanks' status has changed to "urban", the burden of provisioning long-haul, secure telecommunications links 362 miles to Anchorage remains consistent with "rural" health care communications costs. If Fairbanks is not extended or re-designated as "rural", Tanana Chiefs Conference will become ineligible for approximately \$60,000 in annual funding. Compounding the problem, recent initiatives under the National Broadband Plan, adoption of Electronic Health Records Meaningful Use standards, and the Alaska Health Information Exchange project will require a substantial increase in bandwidth from Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center to the Alaska Native Medical Center in Anchorage. Due to these initiatives, Tanana Chiefs Conference is projecting a three to four-fold increase in bandwidth requirements between Fairbanks and Anchorage; without financial relief this would not be possible.

YUKON KOYUKUK

Galena
Huslia
Kaltag
Koyukuk
Nulato
Ruby

Tanana Chiefs Conference is requesting a reconsideration of Fairbanks' status of "urban", or changes in the methodology which will consider unique circumstances in the determination of urban or rural status. At a minimum, Tanana Chiefs Conference is requesting an extension to the grandfather period ending in June 2011. At risk is a critical and increasingly exploited telecommunications link serving not only Fairbanks, but facilitates health care access through Fairbanks to higher levels of care in Anchorage for 25 Interior Alaska communities. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter, please contact my Chief Information Officer, Jim Williams, at (907) 452-8251 ext. 3139.

YUKON TANANA

Alatna
Allakaket
Evansville
Fairbanks
Hughes
Lake
Minchumina
Manley Hot
Springs
Minto
Nenana
Rampart
Stevens Village
Tanana

Respectfully,


Jerry Isaac
President and Chairman