

# Montana State Senate



**SENATOR ALAN OLSON**  
SENATE DISTRICT 23

HELENA ADDRESS:  
PO BOX 200500  
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-0500  
CAPITOL, RM 328  
PHONE: (406) 444-4800

HOME ADDRESS:  
18 HALFBREED CREEK  
ROUNDUP, MT 59072  
PHONE: (406) 323-3341

*The Big Sky Country*

April 27, 2011

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT

SUBCOMMITTEES:  
GENERAL GOVERNMENT - VICE CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Julius Genachowski, Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Southwest  
Washington, D.C. 20554-0005

**RE: Universal Service Fund, Docket No. 10-90**

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I recently learned that the FCC is considering reallocating the Universal Services Fund and have some thoughts and comments on the proposal, both from a personal and a official standpoint. While not acting on behalf of the Committee, I am Chairman of the Energy and Telecommunications Committee in the Montana Senate. As a result of my committee membership, I have become aware of the difficulties that rural Montana face in acquiring and maintaining adequate cell phone service.

The financial support that the cell phone systems in Montana receive through the USF is critical to maintaining communication systems in rural Montana. Montana is a very large and yet sparsely populated state. My senate district is 200 miles long and approximately 60 miles wide and yet contains only approximately 18,000 residents. Many of my constituents are located in very small rural communities, and many of them don't live in any community at all. They are many, many miles from the nearest post office. Cell phone coverage in these areas is critical, not only for communication purposes but for public safety purposes. Moreover, my private employment requires me to be located in isolated areas of Montana in which there is no land line communication system. Montana is currently undergoing an oil and gas boom and much of that activity is located in such areas. As a result, cell phone communication is absolutely critical to the economic development of our oil and gas resources in Montana. Personally, I live outside of Roundup, Montana. Obviously, internet access is imperative in today's modern world for those of us who live in rural areas. I receive my internet access via DSL, but many of my constituents receive internet through satellite uplinks or even through local cell networks. While I support the expansion of broadband system in Montana to provide folks with internet access, there are currently alternatives available for fixed data access. Mobile voice service, in contrast, has few

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if any workable alternatives. Cellular voice services should not be negatively impacted in order to further provide internet access services.

As with most goals which lack adequate funding, it is a matter of balance for the FCC to accomplish both cell phone coverage goals and internet access goals. I encourage you to be cautious, however, in negatively impacting cell phone coverage through restrictions on the Universal Services Fund. I'd be glad to provide further information should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alan Olson".

Alan Olson, Chairman  
Energy and Telecommunications Committee

cc: Michael J. Copps, Commissioner  
Robert M. McDowell, Commissioner  
Mignon Clyburn, Commissioner  
Meredith Attwell Baker, Commissioner  
Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary