

The FCC's Connect America Fund created as part of Universal Service Fund reform should actually help bridge the Digital Divide created and grown during the 8 year Bush Cheney Administration because of FCC's inability or unwillingness to mandate competition among broadband providers, leading to fewer choices and higher prices discouraging adoption and some providers choosing to not deploy in certain areas. Also it should not enrich large telecoms at the expense of ordinary citizens.

This week the FCC is voting on a reform of the Universal Service Fund program. I agree with the agency that the program's goals are noble - but outdated - and that the agency must find a way to funnel its resources toward building broadband networks rather than phone lines.

However, the rules proposed in the industry-authored "ABC plan" would do little to promote the public interest. They would simply allow phone companies like AT&T and Verizon to extract billions more from consumers with no accountability. The FCC's Line Charges in USF reported on by Teletruth and New America Networks that let big telecoms get away with taxpayer subsidies they don't need and to rip-off consumers of traditional telephone service needs to go. No line charges for broadband should be applied to consumers. The FCC Line Charge should have been paid for by the telecoms not passed on to the customers. Don't let this rip-off continue with broadband.

Any new rules that you adopt must require phone companies to justify additional fees before they start taking even more hard-earned money out of our pockets. The Commission must require strong regulatory oversight in exchange for carriers' receiving this ratepayer-funded subsidy.