



NEOSHO R-5 SCHOOL DISTRICT — HOME OF THE WILDCATS

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Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

September 3, 2013

Dear Sir/Madame,

I am writing today in response to the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking which, among other things, proposes changes to the E-Rate program. Before delving into my response to the proposed changes, I want to first thank the FCC for your continued support for the E-Rate program. The E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist schools (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

The Neosho, MO R5 School District is a rural school district in Southwest Missouri with approximately 4500 students and 600 staff with, on average, a 60-70% free and reduced lunch rate. Neosho Schools depend heavily on eRate funding for both Priority 1 and Priority 2 services, however we haven't applied for Priority 2 services for the past two funding cycles as well as this year's cycle simply due to the fact that Priority 1 requests exceed the \$2.2 billion annual allocation. eRate funds are absolutely critical for Neosho Schools to help defer the costs of keeping and improving our educational technology. Furthermore, modern educational practice demands that we keep our infrastructure, connectivity and ed tech practices up date and this would be impossible without eRate funding.

The E-Rate program is a program succeeding in its mission. As the FCC moves forward with this NPRM, it is prudent to remain focused on the fact that E-Rate is a program that works and that any changes to the E-Rate program should be focused on expanding a successful program that has yet to reach its full potential. The current program, while needing some marginal updates to its structure, is most strained by increasing demand for E-Rate-supported services and persistently low funding. The single most effective step the FCC can take to bolster E-Rates current and future success is to provide \$5 billion in funding, an amount commensurate with current demand.



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There are additional programmatic changes and restructuring that can provide additional efficiencies and savings. To rely solely on programmatic efficiencies, however, without providing additional new funding is a shortsighted solution, a policy that fails to address the program's most significant problem: inadequate funding.

I think this NPRM is an opportunity to tackle the important work of expanding a successful program. E-Rate is not a broken program that needs to be fixed; it is a successful program that schools and libraries continue to rely on, a program that must continue to provide funding critical for telecommunications and connectivity.

Neosho Schools would benefit greatly if the eRate program were to expand to be able to fund Priority 2 services and beyond for all schools that apply, regardless of their discount level. We would be able to sure up our infrastructure, which was helped tremendously when we were actually funded a couple of years ago, and hopefully take on educational initiatives that will have a profound effect on how we educate our children. Our school district typically falls into the 80% discount category and we've always had to hold our breath to see if that funding level would get reached. We benefit greatly from the eRate funding we do receive, but the potential to really expand on that with additional funding would be a game changer for us.

Thank you for considering my response as you move forward with your decision on the E-Rate program. I applaud the FCC for its continued efforts to protect the already oversubscribed E-Rate program by ensuring the future of this successful program. I urge you to support significant increased funding for the E-Rate program, and to ensure that the program and its limited resources are protected and preserved.

Sincerely,

Scott Harris
Technology Director
Neosho R5 Schools