

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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November 4, 2013

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We write to you today to request that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) remain committed to recognizing the importance of investing in rural America. We urge the FCC to continue reviewing the reforms to the Universal Service Fund (USF) and their impacts on small rate-of-return regulated telecom carriers and the rural consumers they serve in Minnesota.

Since the initial 2011 USF reform order, the FCC has made significant progress in the deployment of broadband to unserved customers in rural areas served by price-cap carriers through the Connect America Funds. However, there is continued concern about the impact of the reform order on rate-of-return carriers and their ability to further invest in their networks and bring high-speed broadband to the areas they serve. The 2011 order has caused uncertainty for these companies. Of particular concern are the impacts of the Quantile Regression Analysis on capital investment and financing for broadband deployment. While the FCC has taken some steps to provide relief from these negative impacts, the Commission should continue to move forward on addressing any lingering uncertainty.

A robust broadband infrastructure allows for rural consumers to benefit from improved health care access, education, and economic development. We urge the commission to take timely steps to re-establish predictability, sufficiency and transparency for rate-of-return carriers.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to protecting and improving communications infrastructure in rural America. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Al Franken
United States Senator

CC: Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

January 24, 2014

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar
United States Senate
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Klobuchar:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the Commission's Quantile Regression Analysis (QRA) on rural carriers. I appreciate your views and will ensure that your letter will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

As I have made clear since the day I arrived at the Commission, one of the core elements of communications policy that must guide the work of the FCC is the critical need for all Americans to have access to high-speed broadband networks. Access denied is opportunity denied. To that end, I am a firm believer in the importance of universal service, and I agree that the Commission must make timely decisions in order to provide regulatory certainty and create incentives to further efficient investment in broadband networks. We must also be open to modifications to the reforms if it is clear that particular rules are not serving their intended purpose.

To that point, as I stated during the recent House Communications and Technology Subcommittee hearing on FCC Oversight, I have directed the Wireline Competition Bureau to prepare an order for the Commission's consideration that would eliminate the QRA.

I look forward to continuing the work of reforming and modernizing the universal service fund high-cost program -- as well as other components of the Fund -- and to working with stakeholders, including rural carriers and consumers, to ensure that all Americans have access to robust voice and broadband services.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

January 24, 2014

The Honorable Al Franken
United States Senate
309 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

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Tom Wheeler