

Alaska Telephone Association

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May 15, 2014

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

RE: Support for Broadband-Only Subscribers

Chairman Wheeler:

The Alaska Telephone Association writes to add its uniquely rural voice to that of the 44 senators who sent a letter to you on May 6 and the 89 members of Congress who sent a similar letter to you on the same date. As you will recall, all members of the Alaska Delegation are signatories to those letters.

Universal service reform has been disruptive and, in some cases, damaging -- even devastating -- to telecommunications companies and their customers in this state. Perhaps more than anywhere in the nation, rural Alaskans require affordable broadband access. However, reduced high-cost universal service support and unpredictable future revenue streams simply will not create an environment conducive to development of broadband infrastructure and ubiquitous availability of affordable broadband services throughout Alaska.

Unfortunately, today's regulatory/support scheme continues to be based upon yesterday's world of POTS -- such that (by virtue of lost 'support'), 'yesterday's rules' penalize rural companies and rural customers who offer and subscribe to standalone broadband services. Today's counter-productive support policies must be modified to encourage and ensure delivery of broadband services via advanced and developing technologies.

In keeping with the Delegation letters of May 6th, we ask you to quickly reconsider and update that policy so rural Alaska can participate in the future envisioned in the National Broadband Plan. As our elected officials implored in the May 6th letters, “USF is supposed to increase broadband deployment, facilitate transition to new communications technologies, and bridge the digital divide....” Providing sufficient support for stand-alone broadband would remedy that.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Rouse", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

cc: Hon. Lisa Murkowski
Hon. Mark Begich
Hon. Don Young
Hon. Mignon Clyburn
Hon. Jessica Rosenworcel
Hon. Ajit Pai
Hon. Michael O’Rielly