

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 7, 2009

1690

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

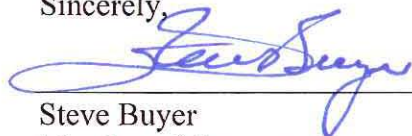
As members of Congress who are privileged to represent districts with substantial rural populations, we are especially interested in the actions of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to improve access to advanced communications services and technologies for rural America. As such, we are formally requesting an investigation by the FCC into the nature and function of Google Inc.'s voice service.

Specifically, we are concerned about recent revelations in the news media concerning Google Inc.'s new voice service, Google Voice. To reduce expenses arising from access charges, Google may block calls from consumers to certain rural telephone exchanges. As you know, regulated common carriers are prohibited from such activities. We understand Google has asserted Google Voice is not a "traditional" telephone service – despite its use of 10-digit telephone numbers and its ability to connect calls between telephones through a local exchange carrier – and, therefore, should not to be treated as a common carrier service. Instead, Google maintains it ought to be allowed to block calls to rural telephone exchanges – a position we find ill conceived and unfair to our rural constituents.

Furthermore, it is our opinion a company should not be able to evade compliance with important principles of access and competition set forth by the FCC by simply self-declaring it is not subject to them without further investigation. If Google is allowed to operate its telephone services outside of the rules by which all other common carriers operate, we worry that the market and support for universal service will be undermined. Rural consumers, whose calls would be only selectively connected, would undoubtedly be the most harmed by this practice.

Consumers benefit from fair competition among service providers. However, competition requires a policy framework that doesn't rely on artificial and formalistic distinctions between online or web-based and "traditional" carriers. Consequently, we urge the FCC to further investigate the nature of Google Inc.'s voice services and ensure the FCC's actions foster fair, lawful, and robust market competition.

Sincerely,



Steve Buyer
Member of Congress



Charlie Melancon
Member of Congress



John Shimkus
Member of Congress



John Barrow
Member of Congress



Leonard Boswell
Member of Congress



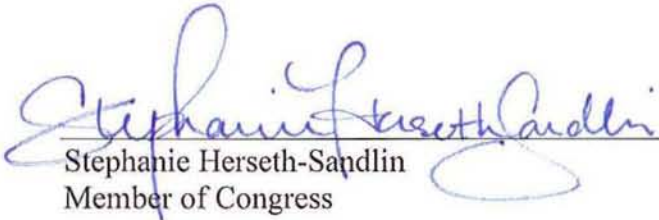
Bobby Bright
Member of Congress



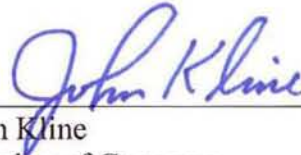
Lincoln Davis
Member of Congress



Parker Griffith
Member of Congress



Stephanie Herseth-Sandlin
Member of Congress



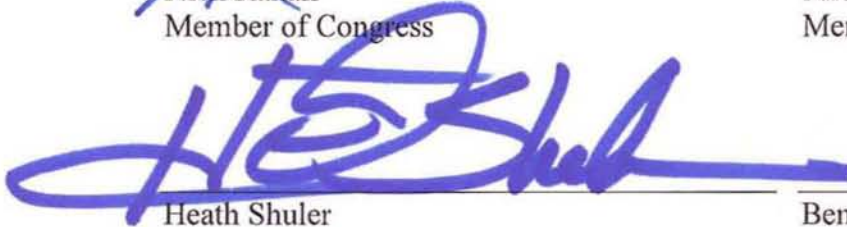
John Kline
Member of Congress



Nick Rahall
Member of Congress



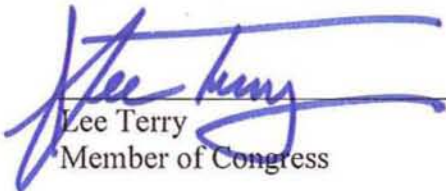
Michele Bachmann
Member of Congress



Heath Shuler
Member of Congress



Bennie Thompson
Member of Congress



Lee Terry
Member of Congress



John Boozman
Member of Congress



Dean Heller
Member of Congress



Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress



Marsha Blackburn
Member of Congress



Jo Bonner
Member of Congress