

ROBERT E. LATTA
5TH DISTRICT, OHIO

ASSISTANT MAJORITY WHIP
VICE CHAIRMAN
CONGRESSIONAL SPORTSMEN'S CAUCUS

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH

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June 6, 2012

0707

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski,

Our economy runs on an instantaneous nationwide telecommunications system, and I appreciate your commitment to ensuring that this network remains the fastest and most reliable in the world. This is a critical matter for every segment of our society, from the most urban to the most rural areas.

As you may recall, over the past year, we have corresponded about the issue of call completion in rural areas. I began hearing of this issue in April 2011 and the problem only exacerbated in my rural, northern Ohio district into the summer and fall. Local exchange carriers were reporting frequent incidences of customers – individuals and small businesses – not receiving phone calls.

Your attention to this serious matter is greatly appreciated, and I was encouraged by the establishment of the FCC's Rural Call Completion Task Force in October 2011 which was tasked with examining the problem of phone calls being terminated in rural areas. The declaratory ruling clarifying the scope of the commission's prohibition on blocking, choking, reducing or restricting telephone traffic in February 2012 was an important step in the direction of addressing the problem of rural call non-completion.

While I am pleased to have heard from one company in my district that they have experienced positive developments in regard to call completion, I am concerned with the overall findings of an industry call completion test project. The project conducted by the National Exchange Carrier Association (NECA), the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA), the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO), and the Western Telecommunications Alliance (WTA) found that rural consumers continue to encounter significant problems receiving calls. The study reported that nearly a third of rural test lines experienced completion problems on more than 20% of incoming calls.

In light of this industry report, I ask that you continue to examine this problem and provide me with an update as to the status of the Rural Call Completion Task Force. Please follow-up with either me or my staff member, Bethany Goodman, at (202) 225-6405.

Businesses depend on the quality and completion of every single phone call. During this economic downturn, many small businesses operate on a small margin, and one incomplete call that results in a business transaction not being made, can be critical. Furthermore, incomplete calls adversely affect families and public safety, and can even be life-threatening. Your attention to this matter is critical to the telecommunications infrastructure in rural Ohio. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert E. Latta", is written over the typed name. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Robert E. Latta
Member of Congress

REL/bag