

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 13, 2014

226

The Honorable Thomas Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We encourage the Commission to move forward promptly with implementation of the Remote Areas Fund (RAF) component of the Universal Service Fund. If implemented correctly, RAF could potentially provide the most rural areas of the country, including the most rural parts of New Hampshire and Missouri, with access to advanced broadband services. RAF, which the Commission has proposed to include satellite broadband and fixed wireless, could help ensure that American consumers who live and work in sparsely populated, unserved areas have access to affordable broadband services.

RAF's stated purpose is to ensure that people living in remote areas of the nation can get access to broadband. The most rural and mountainous areas of New Hampshire and Missouri are in great need of broadband communications. The Commission previously stated that RAF would be implemented in late 2012. It is now 2014 and unserved consumers in rural America expect action to access vital communications services. Continued delay in RAF funding roll-out could mean that important broadband services are being denied to the unserved Americans who need these services most.

We are encouraged that the Commission's recent IP transitions item included a commitment to address the challenges of providing service to the most remote, unserved areas of the country by the end of 2014. Please provide us an update as to how the Commission plans to implement the \$100 million annual RAF portion within the Universal Service Fund this year. States like New Hampshire and Missouri stand to benefit from the immediate implementation of this important program and the broadband services it will bring to American consumers in the most rural and unserved areas.

Sincerely,



Kelly Ayotte  
United States Senator



Roy Blunt  
United States Senator

Cc:

The Honorable Mignon Clyburn

The Honorable Ajit Pai

The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel

The Honorable Michael O'Rielly