

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 31, 2014

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

Received & Inspected

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FCC Mail Room

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

Broadband Internet access has become an essential part of the economic and social fabric in many rural communities, as a tool to build businesses, apply for jobs, enhance educational opportunities and connect to friends and relatives. With robust broadband service, even a small town can rely on its residents' talent and determination to compete with the world. Without it, the same community risks being left behind in today's technology-centric economy.

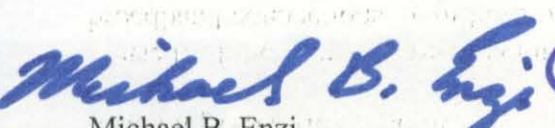
Phase II of the Connect America Fund ("CAF II") offers a tremendous opportunity to bring advanced fiber-fed broadband connections to millions of Americans in rural areas. Thanks to the Commission's well-publicized efforts, thousands of rural communities are now counting on CAF II. Indeed, the June 10 Further NPRM has raised hopes further by more than doubling the promised download speeds in the 2011 USF/ICC Transformation Order, from 4 Mbps to 10 Mbps.

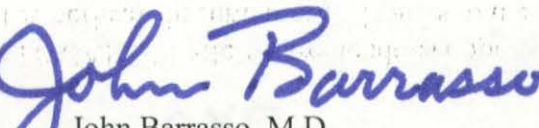
We are writing today to emphasize how important it is to ensure that the final details of CAF II live up to its promise. We are concerned that if the Commission more than doubles the speed requirements without allowing the appropriate level of flexibility in other elements of CAF II, the program's overall mission could be endangered. To the Commission's credit, the June 10 FNPRM identifies a number of constructive ideas that could help achieve the speedier network goals without exceeding the CAF II annual budget. These include extending the term of support up to ten years and providing flexibility on the build-out parameters. We hope you will take these ideas to heart.


We also encourage you to be as precise as possible when targeting support to areas where broadband would not otherwise be available. Now that we are in the final phase of CAFII, we hope the FCC will collect targeted, accurate data on existing service areas to ensure that all unserved customers have access to broadband. It is also important that this effort protects the interests of existing providers from overbuilding.

Despite years of federal efforts to overcome the digital divide, we continue to hear from constituents in Wyoming who seek assistance in bringing advanced broadband service to their homes. The concerns they raise are a reminder of how challenging rural broadband policy can be, but also how important it is that we work with all stakeholders to ensure that we get it right. We thank you for considering our concerns and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,


Michael B. Enzi
United States Senator


John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senator


Cynthia Lummis
United States Representative

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