

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 8, 2014

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The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20536

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We write to request that the Commission make additional changes to certain aspects of Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF II) to provide greater certainty for broadband providers and encourage investment in the expansion of service. CAF II offers an opportunity to bring affordable broadband Internet to homes and businesses across America. We also support the Commission's continuous review of the minimum broadband standards to ensure that residents and businesses across the country have better access to higher speeds.

As our communities grow more interconnected, broadband Internet has become an increasingly essential tool in building businesses, applying for jobs, enhancing educational opportunities and accessing critical health services. In today's technology-centric economy, the current connectivity of Americans may determine the economic vitality of our rural communities for generations to come. With robust broadband service, small towns across Colorado can rely on their own residents' talent and determination to win the global economic race. Fortunately, CAF II is a tremendous opportunity to bring speedier, fiber-fed broadband connections to tens of thousands of Coloradans who wouldn't otherwise have access to this modern necessity.

To ensure the success of this vital program, we ask that the Commission's final rule include additions that will increase certainty and incentivize investment in the deployment of broadband to our rural areas. First, we ask that the CAF II funding period be extended from the current five years to ten years, while maintaining the annual budget of \$1.8 billion, to allocate adequate time and resources for the construction of the higher-capacity network. Second, in cases where data is available to indicate which locations in a census block are unserved is available, we believe participating carriers should be able to shift a portion of CAF II support to reach these unserved portions and guarantee that such communities aren't left behind once the CAF II mission is complete. Finally, we ask that the Commission be as precise as possible when evaluating whether areas are "served" to ensure all the residents of a census block have access to broadband. As we enter the final phase of the Connect America Fund, we are hopeful that these additions will provide the flexibility necessary to support the program's overall mission and continue to expand broadband investment throughout the state.

Despite years of federal efforts to increase connectivity and overcome the digital divide, we still often hear from constituents seeking assistance to bring broadband service to their homes. Unless further steps are taken to reform USF, we fear many rural Coloradans will be denied the health, education and economic benefits supported by broadband infrastructure. Thank you for your consideration of our request, and I look forward to working with you to bridge the digital divide.

Sincerely,



Mark Udall
U.S. Senator



Michael F. Bennet
U.S. Senator



Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress