

August 15, 2014

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

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

In Missouri's 3rd Congressional District, broadband Internet access has become an essential part of the economic and social make-up, particularly in rural communities. Broadband Internet access is used to apply for jobs, enhance educational opportunities, and connect to friends and family.

Phase II of the Connect America Fund ("CAF II") offers an opportunity to bring faster, fiber-fed broadband connections to millions of Americans who wouldn't otherwise receive these benefits. Due to the outreach of the Commission, thousands of rural communities now look forward to receiving the benefits of CAF II. Since CAF II represents the final phase of Universal Service reform for these areas, its rules will effectively determine whether millions of rural residents will have a broadband connection.

I am writing to express how important it is the CAF II live up to its expectations and promises. I am 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 threatened.

First, the CAF II funding period should be extended from the current 5 years to 10 years to allow adequate time for the construction of the higher-capacity network. However, this needs to be done in a fiscally responsible manner, not through unfunded mandates. In addition, the Commission should use the same 10 Mbps standard when identifying broadband availability from competitors in an effort to ensure that communities with just 4 Mbps will not be left behind. The Commission also must establish network build-out parameters consistent with the goal of providing quality broadband service to as many people as possible within CAF's limited funding framework. As such, providers must be given the flexibility to substitute extremely high cost locations with unserved locations in partially served census blocks.

Lastly, I encourage the Commission to be as precise as possible when targeting support to areas where broadband would not otherwise be available. In the interim CAF I phases, an entire census block could be disqualified if a competitive carrier claimed to serve even a small fraction of its

customers, and many areas were disqualified based on the untested assertions of wireless ISPs with line of sight and capacity issues that made them a poor substitute for fiber-fed networks.

Now that the final phase is in progress, it is my hope that the CAF II standards reach those unserved customers, and also require competitive carriers to meet a reasonable standard of verification before depriving a community of CAF II support.

Even though broadband is continuing to grow at high volumes, I still hear from constituents in the 3rd Congressional District seeking assistance to bring broadband services to their home. Thank you for considering my concerns, and I look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Blaine Luetkemeyer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Blaine" being more prominent and the last name "Luetkemeyer" following in a similar style.

Blaine Luetkemeyer
Member of Congress