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FCC Mail Room

1054

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

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

My purpose in writing is to applaud your efforts and those of the other commissioners in Phase II of the Connect America Fund (CAF II) proceeding to further accelerate the deployment of broadband facilities to consumers who lack access to robust broadband.

Broadband Internet access has become an essential part of the economic and social fabric across America. It has been a tool to build businesses, apply for jobs, enhance educational opportunities and connect to friends and relatives. With robust broadband service, individuals with talent and determination can compete globally. Without it, that individual is left behind in today's technology-centric economy.

Phase II of Connect America Fund offers an opportunity to bring speedier fiber-fed broadband connections to millions of Americans who would not otherwise receive these benefits. Thanks to the Commission's efforts thousands of communities are now counting on the Connect America Fund. The Commission's June 10, 2014 Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) identifies a number of ideas of deploying broadband across the country without exceeding the CAF II annual budget.

One such idea is to double the download speeds offered in the 2011 USF/ICC Transformation Order from 4Mbps to 10Mbps. While I think that this is a good idea, 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 mission could be endangered. To address this concern, the Commission may want to consider expanding the build-out to 10 years to allow adequate time for the construction of the higher-capacity network. The same 10 Mbps standard should apply when identifying broadband availability from all competitors, or else communities with just 4 Mbps will be left behind. In addition, it is my hope that the Commission closely examines its network build-out parameters so that they are consistent with the goal of providing quality broadband service to as many people as possible within CAF's limited funding framework.

The Commission has worked hard to help America overcome the digital divide, but I still have constituents seeking assistance to bring broadband service to their homes. The concerns they raise are a reminder of the challenge of building a robust and ubiquitous broadband network.

Thank you in advance for considering my concerns regarding this important issue. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DMP, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress