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## United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 23, 2014

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

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 an opportunity to bring speedier broadband connections to millions of Americans who wouldn't otherwise have it, especially in rural areas, like much of Louisiana, served by the larger "price cap" carriers. Due to the Commission's publicized efforts, many rural communities are counting on CAF II, and its rules will determine for years to come whether or not many rural communities have broadband service. The June 10 Further NPRM raised hopes further by more than doubling the promised download speeds in the 2011 USF/ICC Transformation Order, from 4 Mbps to 10 Mbps.

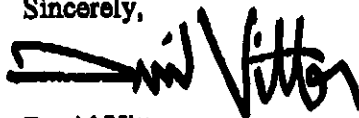
It is important to ensure that the final details of CAF II live up to its promise. I am concerned that if the Commission more than doubles the speed requirements without allowing the appropriate level of flexibility in other elements of CAF II, the program's overall mission could be endangered. To the Commission's credit, the June 10 FNPRM identifies a number of constructive ideas that could help achieve the network speed 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. I hope you will take these ideas under consideration.

I strongly support efforts to ensure that funding is not used to support service where it already exists. Doing so ensures that limited resources will support broadband deployment to areas currently without service and will not subject existing carriers to subsidized competition. In applying standards, I encourage you to be as precise as possible in 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 only a small fraction of its customers, and many areas were disqualified based on the untested assertions of fixed wireless ISPs with line of sight and capacity issues. The Commission should work to target specific areas, avoid duplication, and use reasonable standards to verify competitive providers when considering applications for support.

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Thank you for considering these concerns, and I look forward to working with you to promote policies that will improve our nation's broadband infrastructure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Vitter". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "D" and a clear "Vitter" at the end.

David Vitter  
U.S. Senator