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The Hon. Tom Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554-0005

Dear Chairman Wheeler,

Access to reliable broadband Internet is an essential service for modern Americans. Many people rely on it to effectively communicate with their communities, access critical information, operate a business, and further educate themselves, among other things. These services are especially crucial for Americans who live in rural communities. As we move further in to the 21st century, the ability of rural Americans to have dependable Internet access will become increasingly important.

It is critically important that the millions of Americans who live in rural communities receive high-speed and reliable Internet connections. This transition of the Universal Service Fund to the Connect America Fund shows that the FCC recognizes how important broadband Internet is to the economic development of rural America.

Accordingly, as the Connect America Fund continues through Phase II, I encourage the FCC to continue its diligence in making sure that the rural communities are best served under its proposed rules. It is important that we increase the downstream speeds from 4 megabits per second (mbps) to 10mbps as proposed by the FCC. However, I believe this warrants an extension of Phase II's timeframe from 5 years to 10 years, which will allow the FCC to accurately measure the population of unserved areas and enable providers to adequately construct the necessary broadband infrastructure needed to service these areas. Finally, providers must be given flexibility in high cost locations in order to efficiently use their available funds to reach the maximum amount of people.

Thank you for your continued efforts to provide rural communities with the technology they need to grow and thrive. I urge you to allow local Internet Service Providers the time they need to adequately serve their rural customers.

Sincerely,



John Hoeven  
U.S. Senator