

February 22, 2017

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We are writing to urge the FCC to include a tribal bidding credit in its Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II Reverse Auction Order, which we understand is on the agenda for the February 23 Open Meeting. This credit is critically needed to encourage broadband deployment in Indian Country, the most unserved and underserved regions in our nation in terms of broadband access. CAF II has the potential to be a game changer for Native Americans across our nation, but it needs structural support from the FCC to see this realized.

The Connect America Fund is the FCC's primary program to expand access to broadband and voice services in unserved and underserved areas of our country. Chief among these areas are tribal lands, where 68 percent of rural areas lack access to broadband internet services. High poverty rates, lack of infrastructure, and oftentimes rugged terrain all contribute to the increased cost of installing, maintaining, and upgrading broadband infrastructure on tribal lands.

Our nation has a trust responsibility to ensure the cultural survival, well-being, and sovereignty of tribes and tribal members. Broadband services are critical to fulfilling this trust responsibility, connecting Native youth in the classroom, improving access to health care services through telemedicine, and enabling tribal members to pursue higher education using online resources. Our treatment of tribes in the past has created some of the greatest disparities of any cultural group in our nation; we have a responsibility to turn course and finally honor our treaty and trust obligations of our forefathers.

Without a tribal bidding credit, Indian Country will continue to fall behind in access to broadband and telephone services as providers build out other lower cost rural areas. Past incentives, such as the bidding credit included in the Mobility Fund and Rural Broadband Experiments have proven successful at fostering investment on tribal lands. Therefore we urge you to include a tribal bidding credit in any updated CAF bidding rule Order approved by the Commission.

Sincerely,



Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress (CA-36)

Tom Cole

Tom Cole

Frank Pallone, Jr.

Frank Pallone, Jr.

Keith Ellison

Keith Ellison

Jerry McNerney

Jerry McNerney

Derek Kilmer

Derek Kilmer

Raúl M. Grijalva

Raúl M. Grijalva

Gwen Moore

Gwen Moore

Tom O'Halleran

Tom O'Halleran

Darren Soto

Darren Soto

Earl Blumenauer

Earl Blumenauer

Jared Huffman

Jared Huffman

Ben Ray Lujan

Ben Ray Lujan

Stevan Pearce

Stevan Pearce

Betty McCollum

Betty McCollum

Ro Khanna

Ro Khanna

Suzan K. DelBene

Suzan K. DelBene

Michelle Lujan Grisham

Michelle Lujan Grisham