

December 9, 2019

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

As the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) considers new rules in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund proceeding, we write to emphasize the importance of sustainable networks that meet the needs of consumers now and in the future.

Given that the FCC plays a critical role in connecting rural communities to high-speed internet through the universal service fund (USF), we encourage the FCC to make the most efficient and effective use of those funds. Any large-scale infrastructure project requires reasonable planning that takes account not only of current needs, but also of projected demands over the life of the asset being funded; and the distribution of USF should be no different. For broadband specifically, this requires that networks, built using USF, must be capable of delivering speeds, latency, and usage capacity according to what the FCC deems necessary to meet the needs of consumers over the next decade.

If our rural communities are to survive and flourish, our rural constituents need access to services that are on par with those in urban areas. By contrast, it would be an inefficient use of resources to promote services that cannot keep pace with consumer demand and the evolution of broadband in urban areas. As the FCC moves forward to adopt new rules in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund proceeding, we urge you to promote the deployment of networks that will be sustainable even as new advancements are made and are capable of delivering the best level of broadband access for the available USF budget for many years to come.

Similarly, we believe it is important for the FCC to be responsible for USF resources and ensure that those parties receiving such support can deliver on the commitments they make. This requires monitoring and reporting once USF support is received to guarantee it is being used as intended. The FCC should also make sure before the auction occurs that the participants in the auction can successfully deliver on their promises. If a party is incapable of delivering broadband as promised, the American ratepayer loses twice over – first for having contributed sums that did not go toward the deployment of broadband as hoped, and then again for those ratepayers who reside in the area that ended up not receiving the promised service. It is therefore critical that any use of an auction to distribute USF support include meaningful processes upfront to prequalify bidders. This should apply to all bidders, regardless of the technology they propose to use or the performance levels they promise to deliver.

Thank you for your work to deploy reliable broadband networks in rural America. We look forward to working with you to help close the digital divide and provide rural American consumers with the same kinds of digital opportunities that many others take for granted.

Sincerely,



John Thune
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Deb Fischer
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator




Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



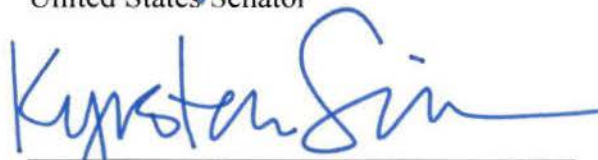
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United States Senator



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United States Senator



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United States Senator



John Boozman
United States Senator



Mike Braun
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Tom Cotton
United States Senator



Kevin Cramer
United States Senator



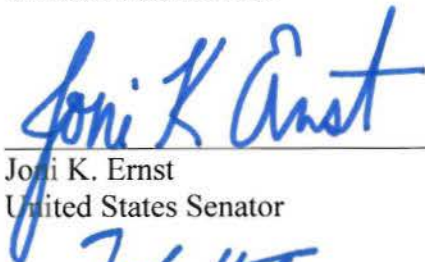
Mike Crapo
United States Senator



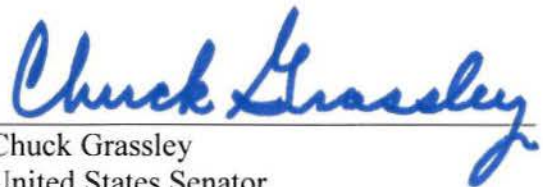
Steve Daines
United States Senator



Michael B. Enzi
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



Chuck Grassley
United States Senator



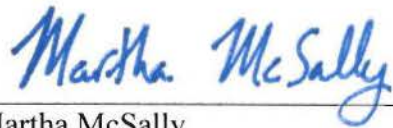
Josh Hawley
United States Senator



John Hoeven
United States Senator



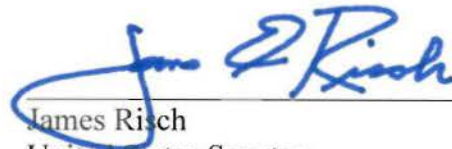
Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator



Martha McSally
United States Senator



David A. Perdue
United States Senator



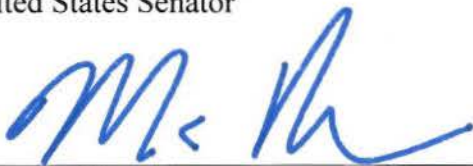
James Risch
United States Senator



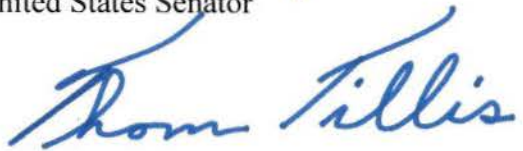
Pat Roberts
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United States Senator



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United States Senator



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United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
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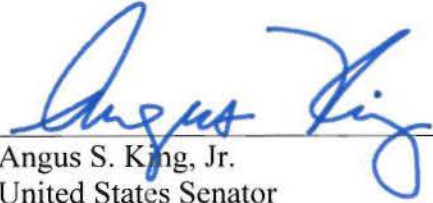
Richard J. Durbin
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