

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90; *Universal Service Reform – Mobility Fund*, WT Docket No. 10-208

In rural West Lafayette, Indiana, I heard a line that stayed with me: “If you look on any farmer’s desk, you’ll probably see old coffee mugs full of USB storage drives.” Our nation’s producers now have the technology to collect silos worth of data: drone-based images detailed enough to track even small changes to a single leaf, real-time information about soil moisture and chemistry, LiDAR-based maps that identify the micro-climates within each plot of land, and bales of information gathered by sensors on his connected combines and sprayers. But without a broadband connection—and, in particular, a wireless broadband connection for many of these applications—the data just gather dust in the bottom of a coffee mug rather than being uploaded to the Internet where it can be put to productive use and boost economic output.

Limited wireless broadband can also impact health outcomes. Take James, as an example. He served in the Navy for 24 years before suffering a spinal cord injury. As a service-disabled vet, he’s now under the active of the VA. James is enrolled in the VA’s home telehealth program, which lets him stay home and visit virtually with a range of VA specialists over a secure video connection, which he can set up on his tablet or smartphone. The virtual visits have eliminated many of his long, two-hour drives to the closest VA facility. But at first, James could not get an LTE signal at his house strong enough to run the VA apps or participate in virtual visits. So he installed a consumer signal booster in his home. For others, that step alone would not have been enough to get the wireless broadband signal needed for telehealth applications.

Like many Americans, I know the frustration of looking down at my smartphone and seeing “No Service” where it normally says “4G LTE.” Right now, this is primarily a problem in rural and remote parts of the country where the private sector business case for deployment is slim to none. It is more than a frustrating inconvenience: It limits access to economic opportunity, to a 21st century education, and to high-quality telehealth applications, to name just a few of the costs. That’s why the FCC voted early last year to award up to \$4.53 billion over the next decade to advance the deployment of 4G LTE in all parts of the country. In the intervening time period, we have heard from a broad range of stakeholders, including small and rural broadband providers, about commonsense steps that would improve the process for identifying areas eligible for funding through the Mobility Fund Phase II Auction.

So I am glad to support today’s FCC decision, which acts on a number of these good ideas. By extending the challenge process by 90 days, we give providers the additional time needed to identify areas of the country that are truly unserved. And by significantly lightening the compliance burden for participants, we will encourage more robust participation in the process and further revisions to the initial map.

As the challenge process runs, I will continue to monitor how our maps align with consumers’ real-world experiences.