

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90

Closing the digital divide—ensuring that every American has access to next-generation broadband and the opportunity it enables—has been this FCC’s top priority. And since early 2017, FCC leadership has been re-orienting our universal service programs to support this important goal. Today’s order represents another step in that process. In it, we move away from legacy approaches to universal service, so we can transition support to the winners of the FCC’s 1.49 billion-dollar CAF II auction—providers that have committed to bringing broadband to more than 700,000 unserved locations within 10 years. In practical terms, today’s vote will help free up funding so more Americans, in more parts of the country, can benefit from new and expanded broadband networks.

In my time on the Commission, I’ve had the chance to get outside of D.C. and meet with the construction crews that are doing the hard work needed to build this next-generation infrastructure. It’s given me a firsthand look at our universal service programs in action.

I’ve met with construction crews in places like Monroe, Nebraska, who were trenching fiber along a 20-mile stretch of State Highway 22. Their efforts will bring faster and more reliable broadband to over 900 rural households in an area with only 8 residents per square mile.

I met Blake in Utqiagvik, Alaska, which is the northernmost community in the country. It’s surrounded by the Arctic Ocean on three sides and 200 miles of tundra to the south. But with support from the FCC’s universal service program, Blake and his crew were busy stringing aerial fiber throughout the community. And Nate showed me the work he’s done to pull fiber through the town’s “utilidors”—which are climate-controlled tunnels located 13 feet beneath the Alaskan permafrost.

And just last week, I was in Sherman, Texas, a rural community about an hour’s drive north of Dallas. That’s where I met Andy and Luis who run C&C Directional Boring. They’re heading up a crew that’s been turning dirt, putting in new conduit, and pulling fiber, so the community can benefit from next-generation broadband infrastructure. They said their crews and services had been in high demand recently with many families and businesses moving into the community, including a new medical park that’s going up right near the deployment site. With the help of this broadband connection, the new facility will bring high-resolution imaging and other medical services to the community.

So I am glad the FCC is focused on making it easier for these crews and many others to bring more broadband to more Americans. I want to thank the staff of the Wireline Competition Bureau for your work on this decision. It has my support.