

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 29, 2011

Hon. Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

The Universal Service Fund (USF) and intercarrier compensation policies have helped bring telecommunications services to every corner of this country and to Americans that would otherwise be unable to afford service. However, as communications technologies evolve, these programs are in serious need of reform if they are to continue to provide access to critical communications services for underserved communities.

We believe the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) needs to enact reforms that allow all Americans – particularly those in remote rural areas – access to various broadband technologies. In today's knowledge based economy, broadband service is not just an opportunity for economic growth, it is a necessity. Reforming the Universal Service Fund to promote the build-out of broadband infrastructure will help bring this crucial technology to more Americans, provided it can be done in a way that is both fiscally responsible and sustainable. Any reforms must work to end inefficient subsidies and to focus available funds into areas where support is needed to deploy and maintain affordable, high-quality broadband services.

Many stakeholders have already weighed in on this issue, and we encourage the FCC to examine their suggestions and proposals carefully when proposing reforms. In particular, America's Broadband Connectivity Plan (ABC) and the proposal by the Joint Rural Association together appear to represent a framework that the Commission can use while crafting responsible Universal Service Fund high-cost support and intercarrier compensation reforms in a broadband environment.

We support the efforts of the FCC to bring broadband service to communities across the United States, and we encourage the Commission to carefully consider industry proposals that accomplish the goals of reform and that lead to more fiscally responsible, sustainable, and effective programs. As part of this effort, we encourage the Commission to adopt a USF and intercarrier compensation policy that encourages fairness and certainty with respect to access charges, maintains the key elements of the ABC and Joint Rural Association framework, and that takes advantage of the competitive marketplace and the wide range of broadband technologies.

Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to working with you further to bring broadband technology to more Americans.

Sincerely,



Senator Amy Klobuchar



Senator John Thune



Senator Orrin G. Hatch



Senator John Hoeven



Senator Mary Landrieu



Senator Jon Tester



Senator Jerry Moran