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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3603

June 1, 2011

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

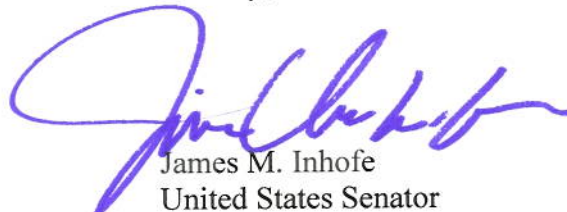
Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I am deeply concerned by your recent announcement that the Commission intends to reform the Universal Service Fund (USF) High-Cost Program and the inter-carrier compensation (ICC) system. The proposal places rural telecom's broadband network investments and operations at risk while putting rural consumers and small businesses at a disadvantage.

I support your efforts to achieve broadband availability throughout our nation. However, this major shift in policy undermines the Telecommunication Act of 1996, which requires that consumers in rural areas have access to advanced services and rates that are reasonably comparable to those available in urban areas. In order to continue to provide broadband to rural areas, any reform to USF and ICC must ensure that rural carriers can sustain and improve upon affordable broadband where it already exists, in addition to encouraging deployment to underserved customers.

Adopting a rural carrier-specific high-cost USF component would help stimulate fragile rural economies while also promoting broadband adoption, goals I know we both share. This would ensure that rural areas have access to broadband services that are affordable, available, and comparable to that of urban areas. I agree that we need reform; however, we need a plan that will not cause unintended consequence or burden current carriers. Rural America cannot be left behind. I look forward to working with you in order to implement sustainable, sufficient, and predictable support systems for all rural broadband providers.

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator