



October 21, 2011

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We applaud your efforts to ensure that every American has a broadband connection and can benefit from the economic, job and marketplace opportunities that advanced communications technology provides. Likewise, we fully support your initiative to scale back unnecessary regulations that are burdensome on entrepreneurs and otherwise impair the nation's economic health. However, we are concerned that an agency within your administration may not share that same commitment.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is nearing the completion of a multi-year proceeding to update the Universal Service Fund (USF) and intercarrier compensation (ICC) cost recovery mechanisms that are so essential to advanced communications infrastructure deployment. Yet, the FCC's direction with this proceeding is inconsistent with the White House's vision and direction. Your administration has announced its commitment to broadband deployment and regulatory reforms that will spur job creation and overall economic expansion. However, the FCC is preparing reform measures that will completely undercut such investment and growth by sidestepping the broadband issue while simultaneously cultivating an environment of continuing regulatory and economic uncertainty throughout much of rural America.

Mr. President, the hundreds of rural telecom providers represented by our associations want to ensure their communities are part of the broadband fabric of our global world. These small businesses are dedicated to not only maintaining their networks, but also to evolving them to make sure they meet the technological and competitive challenges of the era in which we live. The well thought out USF/ICC reform proposals the rural telecom industry put forward as part of the Consensus Framework to the FCC during its proceeding must be given consideration. These proposals, unlike the FCC's theories and hypotheses, align with your administration's goals for


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job creation and the economic recovery of our country. They also provide the assurance that all rural consumers have affordable access to broadband.


Earlier this week, we were struck by the irony of remarks made by U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Undersecretary for Rural Development Dallas Tonsager, and an October 21, 2011 letter from Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Administrator Jonathan Adelstein to FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski that suggested that USDA and RUS were hopeful that the FCC would get USF/ICC reform right but that if they do not, the USDA and RUS stand ready to help ensure rural telcos ultimately receive the support they need to adequately serve their rural consumers. Aren't we all on the same team here? The FCC's independent status notwithstanding, the agency has an obligation and a responsibility to respectfully work with the rest of the government and the public sector alike in the pursuit of policies that are in the best interest of the nation, and not the mere fulfillment of the agency's own agenda.

Mr. President, your administration has been visible and vocal about the need for broadband deployment and job creation and why they are essential for ensuring America's economic health and leadership. We cannot afford to let one agency derail these laudable goals and all the good that has already been accomplished in this regard.

Sincerely,

  
Shirley Bloomfield  
CEO  
NTCA

  
John Rose  
President  
OPASTCO

  
Kelly Worthington  
Executive Vice President  
WTA

cc: The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
The Honorable John Bryson, Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce  
The Honorable Dallas Tonsager, Undersecretary for Rural Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
The Honorable Lawrence Strickling, Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information and Administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce  
The Honorable Jonathan Adelstein, Administrator, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Mr. John Holdren, Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy  
Ms. Melody C. Barnes, Director of the Domestic Policy Council