



February 28, 2018

***Ex Parte Notice***

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554

**RE: *Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90; Universal Service Contribution Methodology, WC Docket No. 06-122; Restoring Internet Freedom, WC Docket No. 17-108; Accelerating Wireless Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Investment, WT Docket No. 17-79; Accelerating Wireline Broadband Deployment by Removing Barriers to Infrastructure Deployment, WC Docket No. 17-84; Promoting Investment in the 3500-3700 MHz Band, GN Docket No. 17-258; Expanding Flexible Use in Mid-Band Spectrum Between 3.7 and 24 GHz, GN Docket No. 17-183; Nineteenth Video Competition Report, MB Docket No. 17-214***

Dear Ms. Dortch:

On Tuesday, February 26, 2018, members and staff of NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association (“NTCA”) as listed in the attachment hereto, met with Commissioner Brendan Carr and his chief of staff, Jamie Susskind, during NTCA’s annual meeting in Austin, Texas. During that meeting, NTCA members advocated with respect to certain issues in the above-referenced proceedings.

Certain NTCA members first discussed their continuing concerns regarding the ability to offer affordable multichannel video programming services to consumers, including concerns specifically with respect to the unending escalation in broadcast content costs.

NTCA members then discussed both the promise of and barriers to the effective deployment of broadband infrastructure generally and 5G-enabled wireless services more specifically in rural areas. Members noted in particular the need for substantial “densification” of robust wired networks to enable 5G services, and that both economic/financial considerations *and* permitting issues continue to present significant obstacles to the widespread deployment of such services in rural America. As a related matter, NTCA encouraged policies that will make more spectrum available for use specifically in rural markets that are often neglected when licenses are awarded only in larger geographic units.

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NTCA next expressed support for prompt action by the Federal Communications Commission (the “Commission”) to address immediate universal service funding shortfalls that are hindering investment in the kinds of networks necessary to promote and sustain the availability and affordability of advanced services in rural areas on a basis reasonably comparable to urban areas. NTCA also urged the Commission to take prompt steps in the wake of any further rulemaking proceeding to restore longer-term predictability to the universal service programs given the long-term nature of the infrastructure investments they are intended to enable.

NTCA members also raised concerns regarding the sustainability of federal universal service support mechanisms given current deterioration in the current contributions base, and encouraged action to ensure that all those that utilize and benefit from the networks that the Commission’s universal service policies support in turn contribute to the availability and affordability of those networks.

Finally, certain NTCA members discussed the need for a continuing Commission role in ensuring that networks interconnect and exchange data seamlessly with one another even in a “broadband world,” even if regulatory oversight of the retail offering of mass-market broadband services may be addressed by other agencies.

Thank you for your attention to this correspondence. Pursuant to Section 1.1206 of the rules of the Commission, a copy of this letter is being filed via ECFS.

Sincerely,

/s/ Michael R. Romano

Michael R. Romano  
Senior Vice President –  
Industry Affairs & Business Development

cc: Commissioner Brendan Carr  
Jamie Susskind

**ATTENDEES FOR  
NTCA MEETING WITH COMMISSIONER CARR AND JAMIE SUSSKIND  
FEBRUARY 26, 2018**

John Klatt, President/CEO, Lakeland Communications  
Kevin Beyer, General Manager, Federated Telephone Cooperative  
Allen Hoopes, Chairman/CEO Silver Star Communications  
Barry Adair, Executive Vice President/General Manager, Wabash Communications  
Don Bitz, Director, Triangle Telephone Cooperative, Inc.  
Doug Boone, Chief Executive Officer, Premier Communications  
Mike Grisham, President & Chief Executive Officer, Shawnee Communications  
Ron Hinds, Chief Executive Officer, GRM Networks  
Bill Hegmann, General Manager, Southwest Arkansas Telephone Coop.  
Fred Johnson, EVP/General Manager, Farmers Telecommunications Coop.  
Rusty Moore, General Manager/Chief Operating Officer, Big Bend Telephone Co.  
Keith Oliver, Senior VP, Corporate Operations, Home Telephone Company  
Don Richards, Richards, Elder & Green, LLP  
Denny Law, Chief Executive Officer, Golden West Telecommunications  
Jonathan West, General Manager and CEO, Twin Lakes Telephone Cooperative  
Shirley Bloomfield, CEO, NTCA  
Michael Romano, Sr. Vice President, NTCA