

My name is Curt Overcash. I am a lifelong farmer and livestock auctioneer in Ottawa, Illinois. Farming has been my lifeblood for more than four decades. I am probably the last person you would think would be vocal about the critical need of broadband infrastructure across the country.

What many people do not realize is that agriculture is a global industry - feeding people near and far. High-tech farming has become vital to maintaining my livelihood. In fact, now, agriculture is a highly technology-driven business reaping billions of dollars every year.

That's why I am strongly opposed to reclassifying broadband under Title II. Broadband certainly should not be grouped with outdated telephone companies and treated as a utility. Have you ever noticed how long it takes a city to fix a pothole on your street? Imagine that kind of inefficiency applying to broadband.

In just the last two decades, high-tech farming has grown by leaps and bounds. Farmers like myself use technology and the Internet in almost every aspect of our work. We are able to harness the power of GPS, smartphone applications, sophisticated crop management software and most importantly, broadband which powers nearly of these things. Broadband is truly the backbone to allowing technology to make our work more efficient and more profitable.

We seen actual farming practices transformed by GPS-guided tractors, geo-tagging and more. The livestock auction industry has also seen a major change due to broadband and the increasingly technology-driven world we live in. Both private farmers and large auction houses now live-cast their sales. In fact, the Midwest Stud Ram Sale, the largest sheep sale in the country, just took place in Sedalia, Missouri, but attracted online buyers from all over the world via simulcast from DVAuction. This broadband-powered technology allows farmers and ranchers to have a global reach and ultimately adds to their bottom line. And the future possibilities are endless.

The progress we have seen is directly tied to the private investment in technology and broadband infrastructure in America. U.S. Internet infrastructure has seen more than \$1.2 trillion in investments over the last two decades resulting in wired and wireless Internet for more than 98 percent of Americans. So it goes without saying that agriculture isn't the only American business benefitting from this private investment.

The importance of continuing the progress in ensuring broadband access for all Americans cannot be overstated. Rural and urban families in every corner of the country depend on it whether they are a student in a major city, a small business owner in a small Midwestern town or a single mother in a rural area.

Broadband Illinois, an organization dedicated to ensuring broadband access throughout the State of Illinois and maximizing broadband's impact and use, said it best: ³Better Broadband means Better Lives for our farmers, doctors, police officers, entrepreneurs, innovators and families.²

The potential heavy-handed regulation of broadband is a serious threat upon us that could undermine all the progress we have made. If the FCC successfully reclassifies broadband under Title II, private investment and important innovation would come to a standstill. This would be disastrous for the agriculture industry. The life-changing innovations we have seen and applied to our business would regress, harming our customers and us.

For years, the Federal Communications Commission and the major providers have had an excellent working relationship that was founded on, and has been successful operating within, the light regulatory touch concept. It is vital that this relationship remains intact.

FCC commissioners and policymakers need to take all of these potential consequences into account before considering unnecessary regulation. Now is the time for continued growth and innovation, not policies that stifle innovation and economic development for Illinois and beyond.