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CONSUMER PROTECTION

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1701

June 10, 2010

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

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

Thank you for recently submitting the National Broadband Plan to Congress. I am writing today to express my concern about the negative impact the Broadband Plan would have on rural areas in America, including the First Congressional District of Kentucky.

I currently have two major concerns with the plan. The first is in the proposal for reforming the Universal Service Fund. While I agree wholeheartedly that the Universal Service program needs reform to improve performance and accountability, I have concerns with the overall implementation of the reform as presented in the plan. Many rural consumers throughout the country depend on broadband connections that are provided by networks built with the assistance of the current Universal Service Fund. In section 8.1 of the broadband plan, the broadband team acknowledged both the initial and "ongoing" costs associated with broadband networks. However, in the same section, the plan states that the availability gap estimate (or cost estimate to provide universal broadband) did not include any amounts necessary to support companies that currently receive universal service support for voice and already offer broadband. In my judgment, it is important to take these amounts into account when determining adequate levels of support for rural broadband in any plan or reform. I ask that the FCC revisit these areas and cost estimates.

The second concern I have is the large differential in the broadband speed goal for rural and urban regions. The FCC needs to ensure that any minimum threshold established for rural residents and businesses is sufficient enough for the future demands of commerce, health care, education, energy, government and public safety. The plan seems to contradict itself in many places by trumpeting the value of robust broadband networks while setting a goal well below robust for rural areas.

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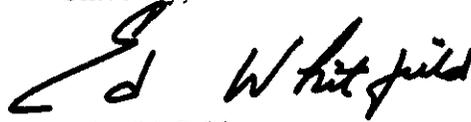
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I encourage you to take the rural areas of our country, including Kentucky's First Congressional District, into account as you work toward implementation of the broadband plan. The economic future of our nation is riding on the development of a robust communications network for all citizens. I request that you seriously consider these concerns, and that you take the appropriate steps to modify the plan's recommendations to ensure all Americans benefit from our goal of having the most robust telecommunications network in the world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Whitfield". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E" and "W".

Ed Whitfield
Member of Congress