

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 12, 2013

1237

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We write you regarding the importance of ongoing universal service reforms to making broadband communications services available to all New Mexicans.

Restoring American leadership in broadband could create opportunities economic growth, distance learning, and telemedicine that directly benefit those living in rural areas in New Mexico and across the nation. Yet according to the Commission's 2012 Broadband Progress Report, nearly half the New Mexicans living in rural areas lack fixed broadband access.

According to the US Census Bureau, about one third of New Mexican households do not have Internet access at home. This digital divide challenge highlights the importance of ongoing efforts to modernize the universal service fund (USF).

In an October 2011 letter on proposed USF reforms, the New Mexico Congressional delegation wrote that our state's "broadband providers need to be able to make and sustain investments in our rural communities." In July 2012, the New Mexico Congressional delegation further asked the Commission to ensure that its quantile regression analysis (QRA) system did not hinder the ability of New Mexico's rural telecommunications providers to provide broadband in unserved and underserved areas.

Due to the QRA system, rural telecommunications companies in New Mexico face USF-related uncertainties that are negatively impacting broadband investments. We have heard reports that almost 70% of small rural carriers in New Mexico have curtailed or cancelled planned infrastructure projects. Such actions could place many New Mexicans even further across the digital divide affecting our state.

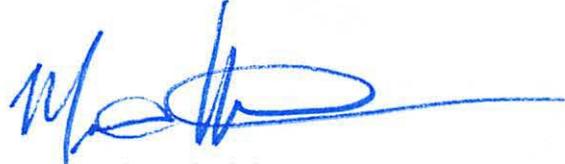
We therefore are encouraged by your announcement today that you will seek to eliminate the QRA. We ask you to consider options that will advance universal service reform while also helping New Mexico's rural telecommunications companies better calculate future levels of broadband support. Such certainty could help remove barriers to making and sustaining broadband investments in rural areas.

Thank you for your consideration within your rules and regulations. We look forward to working closely with you to bring greater broadband access to rural communities in New Mexico and across America.

Sincerely,



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Stevan Pearce
United States Representative



Ben Ray Luján
United States Representative



Michelle Lujan Grisham
United States Representative