

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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FCC Mail Room

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

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I write today as a follow-up to a letter I signed earlier this week with forty-three of my Senate colleagues regarding the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and its reforms to the Universal Service Fund (USF).

I support the policy outlined in the letter that would allow rural rate-of-return carriers to receive USF support for broadband-only subscribers in high-cost areas of the United States, provided that this policy would not result in an increase in the USF fee that consumers are charged as a line item on their telephone bills. Since the contribution factor is assessed quarterly and based on projected demand for Universal Service funding, a policy that better reflects market demand and reduces costs associated with building out and maintaining a service that consumers increasingly no longer want should not contribute to any increase in these projections.

In 2011, I was pleased to see that the FCC, for the first time, set a definitive budget for the High Cost Program. As Commissioner McDowell explained in his statement to the order, "Functionally, the budget serves as an annual cap through 2017." In encouraging the FCC to address smaller carrier support mechanisms, I fully expect the FCC to continue operating within this budget. It is my hope that such a reform will ultimately result in a *savings* to the High Cost Program rather than any increased spending.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify this position and I appreciate your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson  
United States Senator