



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

March 1, 2016

The Honorable Emanuel Cleaver
U.S. House of Representatives
2335 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Cleaver:

Thank you for your letter advocating that funding in the Connect America Fund Phase II reverse auction be made available on a priority basis for fiber to the home networks. Your views are very important and will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

I share your interest in bridging the rural digital divide in our country. The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers and businesses in rural America have the same opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the 21st century economy. The Commission is focused on updating the universal service high-cost program to ensure that we are delivering the best possible voice and broadband experiences to rural areas while providing a climate for increased broadband expansion, all within the confines of the Connect America Fund's budget.

As you may know, I have circulated an Order to my fellow Commissioners for their consideration that will address the framework for the Connect America Fund (CAF) Phase II competitive bidding process. One of the primary policy goals for this competitive bidding process is to ensure widespread participation from all providers that can deliver a high-quality service. Simply put, more competition between providers means that limited universal service funding will be used efficiently to deliver the best possible solutions.

I can assure you that Commission staff is very much aware of the work being done by the Missouri Electric Cooperatives, and staff has met with their representatives to further discuss their views. As the Commission moves forward with finalizing the structure of the CAF Phase II reverse auction, we will take into consideration the issues and concerns presented by all stakeholders and give full attention to the best ways to ensure that rural communities, including those in Missouri, have access to robust and reliable broadband service.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler".

Tom Wheeler