



INDEPENDENT TELEPHONE &
TELECOMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE



W E S T E R N
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
A L L I A N C E



O P A S T C O

February 12, 2008

The Honorable John Dingell
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Joe Barton
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce Committee
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Dingell and Ranking Member Barton:

On behalf of the members of the Independent Telephone and Telecommunications Alliance (ITTA), the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO) and the Western Telecommunications Alliance (WTA), we join you in supporting long-term reforms to the Universal Service Fund (USF) that will provide stable and accountable funding and necessary services to customers in rural America.

Our associations and the millions of customers our members serve want to ensure that customers in the hardest to serve parts of the country have access to the same advanced telecommunications services as those living in urban areas. Support for the underlying network is essential for the provision of broadband, telemedicine and advanced services for schools and libraries in rural areas.

We also recognize that any reforms must ensure that those receiving universal service support are good stewards of the funds and are held accountable for their use. We support the recommendations of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service to halt the practice of providing funding for multiple Competitive Eligible


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Telecommunications Carriers (CETCs) per study area. However, we have serious concerns with proposals that would provide USF support for incumbent wireline carriers through the use of reverse auctions. Reverse auctions have the potential to limit rural networks and customers to today's communications and not allow them to move forward to the networks of the future.

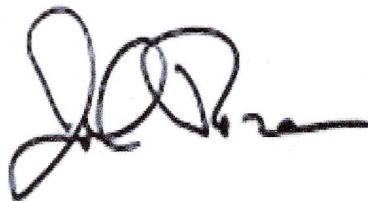
Reforming the contribution mechanism in a way that is competitively and technologically neutral will further provide long-term stability for USF. As the telecommunications world continues to develop, all players must contribute fairly to USF.

As you prepare your agenda for the spring, we stand ready to represent a united voice for rural carriers in the USF debate. We ask that our groups be allowed to provide a witness in any hearings on USF reform so that our members who serve some of the hardest to serve areas of the country can participate fully in the debate. We stand ready to testify and provide any support or information you should need.

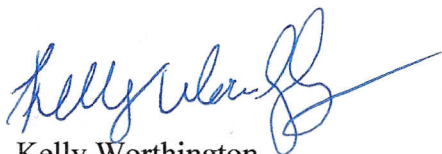
Sincerely,



Curt Stamp
President
ITTA



John Rose
President
OPASTCO



Kelly Worthington
Executive Vice President
WTA