

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 6, 2013

The Honorable Julius Genachowski  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

We write today about expanding access to broadband, an issue vital to our home state of Minnesota. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) took a bold and important step when it reformed the Universal Service Fund to create a new Connect America Fund (CAF), and we applaud the FCC's commitment to significantly expand broadband access to previously unserved, rural Americans. We understand that there are remaining funds from CAF Phase I, and we respectfully request that the FCC work expeditiously to commence a second round of CAF I funding in order to deploy broadband to unserved areas as quickly as possible.

We were encouraged that providers serving Minnesota received approximately \$11 million in the first distribution of CAF I funds. These dollars will be used to provide high speed Internet access to over 14,000 households that were previously unserved in Minnesota. However, more must be done.

More than 226,000 residents in Minnesota remain without access to broadband. This is simply unacceptable. As the FCC has noted, broadband access is essential to innovation, jobs, and global competitiveness today, and it is only going to become more indispensable in the coming years. Farmers in rural Minnesota rely on the Internet to check market prices and buy and sell their products. Rural hospitals and clinics need high speed Internet access to coordinate with specialists and major hospitals in urban areas. And businesses cannot remain competitive—or even survive—without access to high speed Internet service.

Unfortunately, less than half of the funds allocated for CAF Phase I distribution were used. We appreciate that the FCC recognizes the need to reexamine its CAF funding guidelines in light of the need for more broadband and to productively use the remaining funds. We urge you to act as soon as possible to ensure that all of the remaining funds are allocated to expand broadband infrastructure where it is most needed.

Rural Minnesotans are entitled to the same high speed connectivity as Americans in urban areas. Unfortunately, almost a quarter of the population living in rural areas lacks access to broadband service and almost a third of the population living in tribal areas lacks access. It is essential that the FCC act as quickly as possible to deploy broadband to these areas and help close the digital divide in this country.



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

Sincerely,



Al Franken  
United States Senator