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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

March 5, 2013

Re: *In the Matter of Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90,*
Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Released: Nov. 19, 2012)

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

Thank you for taking on the difficult task of overhauling the Universal Service Fund (USF) and creating the Connect America Fund (CAF). It is vital to Eastern and Southeastern Ohio that your reforms succeed. At this stage however, only relatively modest gains have been achieved for rural consumers in my district. Thousands of my constituents live in areas that are unserved by broadband service and connectivity cannot come fast enough for these citizens.

While the FCC has set aside \$600 million to invest in new broadband deployment during 2012 and 2013, much of this capital remains on the sidelines and the wait for broadband continues. I believe that investment should happen as quickly as possible to unserved areas only, and that the FCC should take care not to fund companies that use that money to compete against privately funded entities offering robust broadband.

More than 18 million people without broadband service live in rural areas served by price cap companies, with tens of thousands of those being constituents of mine in Eastern and Southeastern Ohio. CAF Phase I was designed to bring rapid broadband expansion into these areas, and if CAF-I lags, so will broadband deployment. The current slow pace is regrettable when you consider that the FCC financed state-of-the-art networks for thousands of other rural Americans a decade or more ago.

I urge the FCC to move quickly to ensure that CAF support brings broadband to unserved areas as soon as possible. I encourage the FCC to proceed with a second round of CAF I projects in 2013 that fully utilizes the \$600 million set aside for this important work. However, as the FCC continues to work on reforms to USF and CAF II funding, I encourage you to explore all options, including competitive bidding to ensure all funds are used in the most efficient and expeditious way possible.

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As you know, broadband is an economic driver that provides rural Americans access to educational opportunities, remote healthcare applications, and high-speed wireless service. Applications relying on a robust broadband infrastructure are now essential to agricultural markets, emerging small businesses, and consumer access to online retailers. It is vital to Eastern and Southeastern Ohio that the FCC quickly refine the rules so these funds are rapidly invested in broadband infrastructure that will help attract more businesses and jobs to these areas. We cannot continue to leave these Americans behind.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "B" and "J".

Bill Johnson
Member of Congress