



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

August 11, 2014

The Honorable Mike Doyle
U.S. House of Representatives
239 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Doyle:

Thank you for your letter concerning the urgent need for deployment of advanced broadband networks in order to ensure our nation's future. I greatly appreciate your leadership on this vital issue. I wholeheartedly agree with you that high quality broadband will play a crucial role in our country's growth and prosperity in the years to come.

Broadband is a powerful platform that encourages economic growth and facilitates improvements in education, health care, public safety, and other key policy areas. This is particularly true for small and rural communities, where the availability of high quality broadband can be the difference between a future of growth and innovation or economic decline.

Private sector incumbent telephone and cable companies have invested billions of dollars in broadband deployment in the past decade. That investment has been of great benefit to our nation in many ways. However, that investment has not yet reached every corner of America. Around the country, communities have focused on the importance of ensuring that they receive the benefits of broadband, and some have concluded that investing in their own broadband efforts will provide more competition – along with the economic and social benefits that accompany competition – for their residents and businesses.

At the same time, many states have enacted laws that place a range of restrictions on communities' ability to invest in their own future. There is reason to believe that these laws have the effect of limiting competition in those areas, contrary to almost two decades of bipartisan federal communications policy that is focused on encouraging competition.

I am heartened by your support for community broadband and your recognition of the vital importance of robust broadband to our country as a whole and to smaller communities in particular. As you note, "it was the intent behind the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to eliminate barriers to entry into the broadband market and promote competition in order to stimulate more innovation and consumer choice."

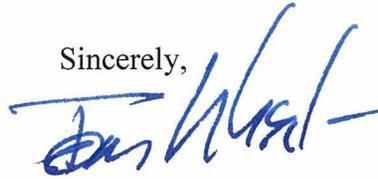
We have received the petitions filed by EPB of Chattanooga, TN, and the City of Wilson, North Carolina, and are reviewing them. Any Commission decision on community broadband issues will be made only after a full opportunity for comment by all interested parties in an open

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proceeding and a careful analysis of the specific factual, policy, and legal issues involved. I respect the important role of state governments in our federal system, but I know that state laws that directly conflict with critical federal laws and policy may be subject to preemption in appropriate circumstances. I recognize that federal preemption is not a step to be taken lightly without a careful consideration of all relevant legal and policy issues.

Thank you for your leadership on these crucial issues. Your views are very important and will be included as part of the Commission's review. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tom Wheeler