



The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: ET Docket No. 14-165; WC Docket No. 11-10; WC Docket No. 19-195

Dear Chairman Pai,

We write to commend you and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for your dedication to eliminating the digital divide. As you know, the broadband gap leaves at least 19.4 million Americans living in rural areas without access to the connectivity they need to enjoy the same opportunities as those living in better connected areas.

Because of the broadband gap, we have seen students, farmers and ranchers, small businesses and rural patients struggle in ways that not only affect individual people but whole communities and our entire nation. Students can be at risk of falling behind when teachers assign homework that requires broadband connectivity. America's farmers and ranchers can be put at a disadvantage in the 21st Century global economy, unable to access advancements in precision agriculture that require connectivity. Patients, particularly seniors and veterans, living in remote areas can be denied access to telehealth solutions that can reduce costs and improve their quality of care. Businesses and workers can struggle to compete and expand.

The impacts that stem from the digital divide are myriad and effect almost every aspect of life.

To tackle this challenge, policymakers must support a mixed-technology approach that leverages every solution available to bring connectivity to unserved areas in the most effective and swift manner possible.

That is why we joined a coalition called Connect Americans Now (CAN) on comments filed with the FCC, in June, urging the Commission to support a petition submitted by Microsoft for a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM).

Connect Americans Now is a coalition of more than 200 organizations and companies representing voices in agriculture, health care, education, small business, technology, rural advocacy and more — committed to completely eliminating the digital divide in rural America by supporting a mixed-technology approach that leverages traditional technologies, like fiber, alongside innovative solutions like TV white space (TVWS) technology.

Microsoft's petition will help accomplish a number of things that would help ensure our rural communities become connected. The proposals in the petition will not only better enable ISPs to utilize TVWS technology to bring broadband to rural areas, but also open up the technology to a variety of new user groups and use cases. The petition outlines specific actions that the Commission should take, such as increasing power limits in less-congested areas and permitting higher power operations in the first adjacent channel to broadcasters. The petition introduces specific mechanisms to prevent interference with existing broadcasters while maximizing the use of TVWS technology for broadband deployments.

Most importantly, the petition eliminates the regulatory barriers to unleash innovative solutions like TVWS. Using traditional technologies, like fiber, and more innovative solutions, like TV white spaces technology, will ensure that our rural communities are connected in the most affordable and reliable way.



We respectfully urge the Commission to issue the FNPRM on this petition before the end of 2019 and work swiftly to implement rule changes by the end of 2020.

It is imperative that the FCC act as soon as possible to clear regulatory challenges to innovation that can more swiftly help eliminate the digital divide.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued dedication to eliminating the digital divide.

Sincerely,

Connect Americans Now
American Telemedicine Association
Connected Nation
Consortium for School Networking (CoSN)
Economic Development Association of North Dakota
Gigabit Libraries Network
Livingston Mercantile
Midwest Food Products Association
Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation
Mississippi Hospitality & Restaurant Association
Montana Business Leadership Council
National Grange
National Rural Education Association (NREA)
Nevada Farm Bureau Federation
Next Century Cities
Oregon Hop Growers Association
South Dakota Farm Bureau Federation
Washington Farm Bureau Federation
Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance

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