



May 4, 2017

Via ECFS

Chairman Ajit Pai
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
8th Floor
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai,

As leaders of rural broadband companies across our great nation who count our customers in the thousands or even hundreds, and as members of USTelecom - The Broadband Association, we are writing to express our strong support and gratitude for your vision and leadership. The mission of digital opportunity you expressed on day one of your chairmanship resonates deeply in the communities we serve.

There are few places where digital opportunity holds more transformative potential than in the hollows, valleys, mountains and farm country of rural America. Our small companies have served our nation's communities for generations. Many were founded, and are still led today, by the same families. We have never given up our commitment to bring communications to everyone in our service areas. This commitment started with the telephone, and it continues to this day as we work to deploy next-generation high-speed broadband.

We encourage you to keep your focus on closing the digital divide, and we will do everything we can to support this important work. Key to this effort is the initiative you began last week to ensure broadband companies can continue to invest vigorously in stronger, faster networks for consumers, free from the bureaucratic straightjacket of outdated regulations known as Title II.

Each of us believes profoundly in preserving internet freedom, and we would never consider acting contrary to the interests of our customers. You can call anyone you want and say anything you like on the telephone. Our customers deserve—and have always enjoyed—these same freedoms online, so we take no issue with efforts to safeguard these freedoms. Rural America urgently needs a smarter and more practical approach than rules based on laws written when our grandparents were stringing the countryside with copper and even cattle wire to connect neighbors on old party line telephones. A clean, modern framework would accomplish two things: clear, unequivocal net neutrality protections for consumers; and equally clear, unequivocal regulatory certainty for companies working to bring broadband's benefits to everyone.

All too often, our customers are the forgotten Americans who live below the radar of Washington policymakers and are overlooked or outright ridiculed by late-night comedians. As a son of Parsons, Kansas, who has proclaimed digital opportunity the centerpiece of his chairmanship, we know you will never forget these families and communities.

Each to our own, our companies may be relatively small. But small U.S. broadband providers collectively serve many millions of Americans. We are behind you, sir, and urge you to stay the course by moving forward in a way that allows for vigorous, continued investment in rural broadband networks, and at the same time ensure a smarter path to net neutrality. With the common sense, fair and modern approach you outlined, there is absolutely no need to make this a heated debate or an either/or choice. Our connected nation—urban, rural and everything in between—will be stronger for the digital opportunities your leadership is making possible.

Sincerely,

/s/

Robert Hunt
Vice President
GVTC
New Braunfels, Texas
Chairman, Board of Directors
USTelecom

Anand Vadapalli
President & CEO
Alaska Communications Systems
Anchorage, Alaska

Kay H. Mount, Ph.D.
President & General Manager
Beggs Telephone Company, Inc.
Beggs, Oklahoma

Roger F. Anderson
General Manager
Cooperative Telephone Exchange
Stanhope, Iowa

/s/

Darby McCarty
President/CEO
Smithville Communications
Ellettsville, Indiana
Chairwoman, Leadership Committee
USTelecom

Paul Briesch
General Manager
Baca Valley Telephone Company, Inc.
Sierra Communications, Inc.
Des Moines, New Mexico

Jason Williams
CEO
Blackfoot Telecommunications Group
Missoula, Montana

Trent Boaldin
President & CEO
EPICTOUCH
Elkhart, Kansas

Jason S. Anderson, CPA
Co-Manager
Grand Telephone Company, Inc.
Jay, Oklahoma

Kenneth Doughty
President
Hinton Telephone Company
Hinton, Oklahoma

Kathe A. Johnson
Treasurer
Hot Springs Telephone Company
Missoula, Montana

Michelle Baudino
Secretary/Treasurer
Kinsman Mutual Telephone Company
Kinsman, Illinois

Bruce Hanway
Secretary/Treasurer
Monon Telephone Company, Inc.
Monon, Indiana

George Tays
General Manager
Montrose Mutual Telephone Company
Dieterich, Illinois

Darla Joseph
General Manager
Nucla-Naturita Telephone Company
Nucla, Colorado

Dan Overland
Senior Vice President
Pottawatomie Telephone Company
Earlsboro, Oklahoma

Scott Barber
President & CEO
Hawaiian Telcom
Honolulu, Hawaii

Eric Schmidt
President
Home Telephone Company
Saint Jacob, Illinois

James Daubendiek
CEO
Jefferson Telecom
Jefferson, Iowa

Brad Lyon
General Manager
Moapa Valley Telephone
Overton, Nevada

Dave Mills
President
Monroe Telephone Company
Monroe, Oregon

Royster Tucker III
President & CEO
North State
High Point, North Carolina

Richard Ruhl
General Manager
Pioneer Telephone Cooperative
Kingfisher, Oklahoma

Arne Hayes
Chairman
Rainier Connect
Eatonville, Washington

Page 4
May 4, 2017
Letter to Chairman Ajit Pai

Grace Ochsner
Manager
Reynolds Telephone Company
Reynolds, Illinois

Bill Colston, Jr.
President & General Manager
Riviera Telephone Company
Riviera, Texas

Ron McCue
President & COO
Silver Star Communications
Freedom, Wyoming

Mike Harian
General Manager
Washington County Rural Telephone Cooperative
Pekin, Indiana

Tom Walden
General Manager
Rice Belt Telephone Company
Weiner, Arkansas

Christopher French
President & CEO
Shenandoah Telecommunications Co.
Edinburg, Virginia

Gary Gilmer
President
Southwest Texas Telephone Company
Rocksprings, Texas

Jack Keen
CEO & Chairman of the Board
Western New Mexico Telephone Co.
Silver City, New Mexico