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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4104

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Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I write to express my concern regarding the delayed implementation of the rural call completion order and to request an update regarding your agency's ongoing efforts to resolve this problem. Unless the Federal Communications Commission takes further action, I fear the call failures will persist and will continue presenting a significant economic and public safety threat to rural communities across our country.

I remain concerned about the negative impact the call completion problem is having on the rural communities I represent. The problem poses a serious public safety threat, such as when 911 call centers cannot reach individuals in distress or when doctors cannot reach their patients regarding follow-up care. The call failures also create frustration for those trying to connect with friends and family, as well as small businesses losing opportunities when they miss calls from customers. The rural Americans affected by this problem are rightfully frustrated and demand a solution.

I applaud the actions the Commission has taken to address the problem, including the consent decrees against providers failing to properly complete long-distance telephone calls to rural consumers. Additionally, I was pleased when the Commission unanimously adopted the Rural Call Completion Report and Order and a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) on October 28, 2013. The rules approved by the Commission would support the collection of information that would improve the monitoring of incoming calls to rural areas, encourage providers to adopt industry best practices, and inform the agency's ongoing investigation and enforcement efforts.

I understand, however, that the Commission has not yet submitted the rules for final approval by the Office of Management and Budget. I am concerned about the delayed implementation of the rules and encourage the Commission to act in a prompt and timely fashion to move forward with implementation. The widespread and persistent failure of calls to rural consumers threatens the basic integrity of our nation's communications network and must not be tolerated. The problem has continued for far too long, and swift and decisive action must be taken to restore quality and reliable telephone service in rural America.

Chairman Wheeler
September 25, 2014
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Please provide an update regarding the Commission's timeline for submitting the rules for final approval and implementing the rules once approval has been granted. I encourage the Commission to consider taking additional actions, such as applying basic quality standards on intermediate providers, as was proposed in the Commission's FNPRM. I am also interested in learning of further steps the Commission plans to take to resolve this pressing problem.

Thank you for your consideration of my concerns. I appreciate your attention to this important issue and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping "T" and "J".

Tim Johnson
U.S. Senator

cc: Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly