

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 12, 2017

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

Dear Chairman Pai:

We applaud the creation of the Rural Broadband Auctions Task Force. If implemented correctly, the Mobility Fund II (MF-II) and Connect America Fund Phase II (CAF-II) auctions are an opportunity for real progress in the Commission's efforts to close the digital divide. We write to urge that an accurate understanding of mobile broadband coverage for consumers in rural America guide the Task Force's efforts to implement these upcoming auctions.

The MF-II and CAF-II auctions should promote new broadband deployment in unserved and underserved areas in a manner that accounts for the real-world experiences of those living in the most remote parts of the country. To ensure the limited funding available for these auctions is allocated efficiently and responsibly, the Task Force should work to ensure that coverage data is collected in a consistent and robust way.

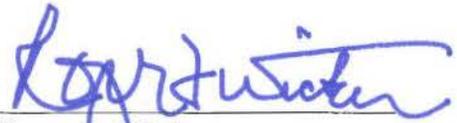
More importantly, the Commission's efforts must accurately target every area that is in need of support so that no one is left behind. Residents, first responders, businesses, public institutions, and travelers in rural areas need reliable mobile broadband access. To that end, collecting and using reliable, standardized coverage data are critical steps toward ensuring consumers in the most rural and remote communities have access to the comparable services that Congress mandated for Universal Service.

We fully support the Commission's objective to promote broadband deployment throughout rural America and look forward to continuing to work with you to close the digital divide.

Sincerely,



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator