

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**July 31, 2017**

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

The Honorable Mignon Clyburn  
FCC Commissioner  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

The Honorable Michael O'Reilly  
FCC Commissioner  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

*Re: Expanding the Economic and Innovation Opportunities of Spectrum Through Incentive Auctions, GN Docket No. 12-268; Amendment of Part 15 of the Commission's Rules for Unlicensed Operations in the Television Bands, Repurposed 600 MHz Band, 600 MHz Guard Bands and Duplex Gap, and Channel 37, ET Docket No. 14-165; Amendment of Parts 15, 73 and 74 of the Commission's Rules to Provide for the Preservation of One Vacant Channel in the UHF Television Band for Use by White Space Devices and Wireless Microphones, MB Docket No. 15-146; Amendment of Part 15 of the Commission's Rules for Unlicensed White Space Devices, ET Docket No. 16-56*

Dear Chairman Pai, Commissioner Clyburn and Commissioner O'Reilly:

As members of the House Rural Broadband Caucus as well as members interested in decreasing the digital divide, we have dedicated ourselves to ensuring that rural communities enjoy the same access to services and opportunities enabled by broadband internet that are so often taken for granted in urban and suburban communities. We would never fathom a rural resident or business relocating to enjoy plumbing or electricity, but too many of our constituents face just that choice when it comes to the modern equivalent: accessing broadband and the internet.

We are writing because we believe a solution could well be at hand, one that could be realized with significant private sector support and minimal infrastructure investment. Specifically, we are urging the Commission to preserve at least three, 6 MHz television white spaces channels in every media market across the United States in order to promote access to affordable broadband internet, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

According to the FCC's 2016 Broadband Progress Report, approximately 34 million Americans do not have broadband internet access. Of these, about 24 million live in rural communities that lack the network infrastructure necessary to provide a reliable and affordable broadband connection. This means students, farmers, doctors, law enforcement officials, and families across rural America are unable to

access the internet and, consequently, are being denied the economic, health, and public safety advances enabled by that access.

The effects of this disparity are clear for struggling communities. According to a recent Wall Street Journal article, researchers at universities in Texas, Mississippi and Oklahoma found that rural counties with access to broadband correlated to higher incomes and lower unemployment. One in ten Americans is left behind without access to technological opportunities readily available in other parts of the country. Respectfully, we believe it's time for the FCC to take concrete steps to make affordable broadband internet, and the opportunities that come with it, available to *all* Americans.

We believe that the television white spaces (TVWS) have strong potential to revolutionize broadband internet accessibility in rural areas. TVWS allows a broadband internet connection to cover 9 miles, while navigating the physical terrain that at times can make wireless broadband connectivity difficult. Because of this range, these internet connections are extremely cost-effective requiring minimal infrastructure investments, and are far more dependable than the limited connections that many rural areas currently have.

In its Unlicensed Operations in the TV Band proceeding, the FCC adopted rules enabling devices to operate on channel 37 (608-614 MHz) as well as in the so-called "duplex gap" (652-663 MHz) created by the Incentive Auction. The FCC should maintain these rules as it reviews petitions for reconsideration. And in its "Vacant Channel" proceeding, we request that the Commission finalize its proposal and preserve a vacant channel in each market in the post-auction broadcast TV band (54-608 MHz). These steps will ensure that three useable TV channels remain available in every market around the country.

Robust low-cost broadband connections literally connect rural communities to the rest of the world. They allow students to connect to their school networks from home, or use online resources for homework and other projects. Farmers could use cloud computing and analytics software to better grow and monitor their crops, reduce waste, save water, optimize fertilization and maximize yields. Doctors in rural health clinics would be able to access life-saving information through broadband connected networks with urban medical centers. Law-enforcement would be able to quickly dispatch officers and relay arrest-warrant information during emergencies. Families could not only share pictures and stay in touch with each other, but also access a wealth of economic opportunities to which they would otherwise not have access.

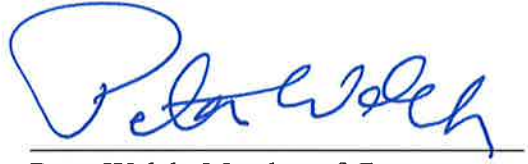
In short, broadband internet access will help close the opportunity gap between Americans in rural communities and Americans in urban centers. We believe the TV white spaces hold great promise toward closing that gap quickly and affordably.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Kevin Cramer, Member of Congress



Peter Welch, Member of Congress



Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Member of Congress



Mark Pocan, Member of Congress



Mark Meadows, Member of Congress



Suzan K. DelBene, Member of Congress



Austin Scott, Member of Congress



Derek Kilmer, Member of Congress



Darrell Issa, Member of Congress



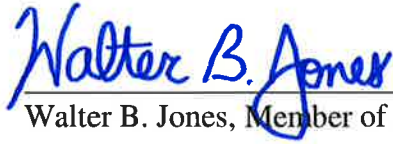
Anna G. Eshoo, Member of Congress



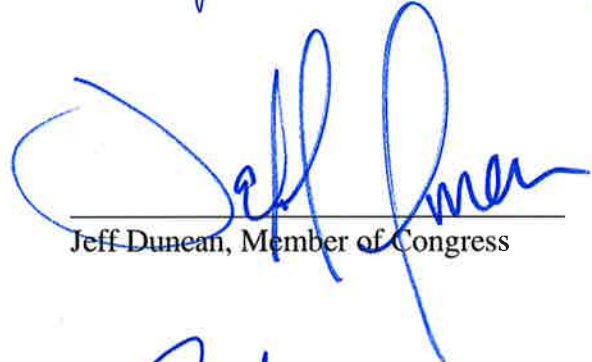
Mark Walker, Member of Congress



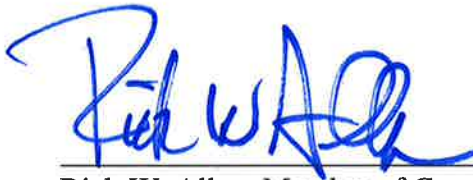
Sanford Bishop, Member of Congress



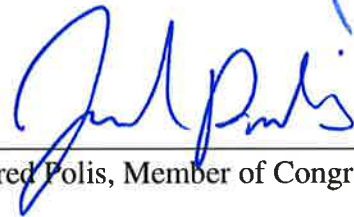
Walter B. Jones, Member of Congress



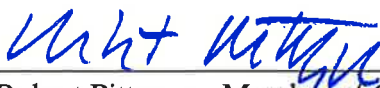
Jeff Duncan, Member of Congress



Rick W. Allen, Member of Congress



Jared Polis, Member of Congress



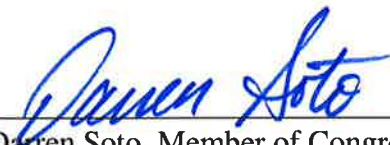
Robert Pittenger, Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester, Member of Congress



Jaime Herrera Beutler, Member of Congress



Darren Soto, Member of Congress



Steve Stivers, Member of Congress



John Moolenaar, Member of Congress

  
John Garamendi, Member of Congress

  
Hal Rogers, Member of Congress

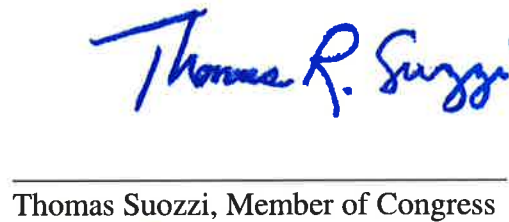
  
Will Hurd, Member of Congress

  
Tom Marino, Member of Congress

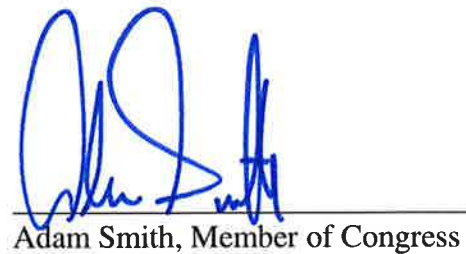
  
David B. McKinley, P.E., Member of Congress

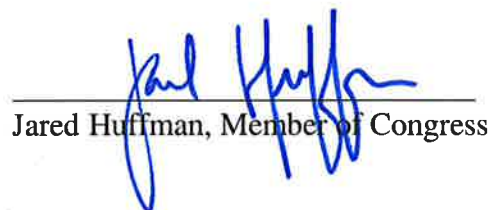
  
Robert J. Wittman, Member of Congress

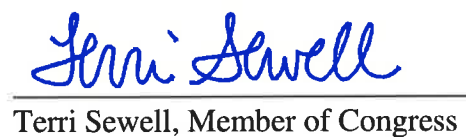
  
Col. Paul Cook (Ret.), Member of Congress

  
Thomas Suozzi, Member of Congress

  
Rod Blum, Member of Congress

  
Adam Smith, Member of Congress

  
Jared Huffman, Member of Congress

  
Terri Sewell, Member of Congress

  
Dan Newhouse, Member of Congress

  
Denny Heck, Member of Congress


  
Pramila Jayapal, Member of Congress

  
Doug Collins, Member of Congress

  
Jody B. Hice, Member of Congress

  
David G. Valadao, Member of Congress

  
Thomas A. Garrett, Jr., Member of Congress

  
Ruben Gallego, Member of Congress