



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

January 29, 2015

Dear Chairman Wheeler and Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai, and O’Rielly:

As elected officials, we represent a diverse range of communities, large and small, urban and rural, from across the country. Our cities and residents all have different needs, yet we all agree that high-quality broadband Internet access is necessary infrastructure for the 21st century.

It is increasingly clear that ultra-fast, next-generation Internet networks are the key to building and sustaining thriving communities, as essential as good healthcare, great schools, and reliable public safety. Indeed, in the coming decades, the Internet will increasingly become a platform for delivering these and other core services to our citizens, in addition to providing an onramp to the jobs and opportunities of tomorrow. Providing high-quality Internet is inarguably essential to safeguarding the public interest in the years and decades to come.

Because we share this belief, we recently came together as part of a new effort called Next Century Cities. Next Century Cities supports our fellow community leaders across the country as they seek to ensure that all have access to fast, affordable, and reliable Internet access.

We are writing to you today because you now face a critical choice that will help determine whether America’s towns and cities are able to develop the digital infrastructure that will power the next century, or whether they will be shut out of this information revolution.

This past summer, two Next Century Cities member communities - Wilson, NC, and Chattanooga, TN - filed petitions to you seeking relief from state laws that have inhibited their ability to expand their broadband Internet networks to other communities.

As the Commission considers these petitions and contemplates a response, we, the undersigned, urge you to respect the principle of local self-determination.

Our communities - and all members of Next Century Cities - have taken divergent approaches to bringing broadband Internet to our residents, from municipal networks to partnerships with private providers, including major incumbents. Some of us have made great progress; others of us are still early on the path.

What has made possible this diversity of approaches and, in many cases, successes, has been the ability for our communities to make choices that suited our individual needs and circumstances. It is cities and their elected officials who most understand what it takes for any given community to thrive, prosper, and succeed. Without local choice and self-determination, cities cannot benefit from a robust range of approaches, and will be stymied in their efforts to achieve truly next-generation networks.

While we are united in the goal of next-generation broadband networks, we also recognize that there exists a variety of models open to communities. Some cities choose to build and administer their own

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municipally-owned networks, others develop public-private partnerships, while still others achieve their goals through agreements with private providers. The principle of local autonomy does not favor any one of these models, but rather protects the ability of communities to maintain as many options as possible. When this principle is not respected, we weaken opportunities to promote competition and innovation--two key forces that drive progress in communities.

We write only to urge that, as you consider these petitions, you take proper account of the importance of local choice and autonomy. The benefits of high-quality broadband are now beyond dispute: these projects have stimulated local innovation and economic development, enhanced education, improved government services, and opened new worlds of opportunity to communities and citizens. It is our hope that federal policy will support the realization of these outcomes in our communities and in towns and cities across the country, by empowering every community to meet the needs of their residents.

Signed,



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Mayor
Ammon, Idaho



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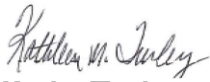
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Ken Lucas
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Doris Truhlar
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Kathy Turley
City Council Member
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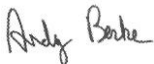
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Don Gerard
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Champaign, Illinois



Andy Berke
Mayor
Chattanooga, Tennessee



Nancy Berry
Mayor
College Station, Texas



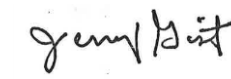
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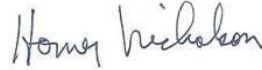
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Bill King
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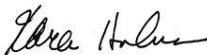
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