



OPASTCO

**ORGANIZATION
FOR THE PROMOTION
AND ADVANCEMENT
OF SMALL
TELECOMMUNICATIONS
COMPANIES**

April 29, 2010

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Whitten Building, Room 200-A
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I read with great interest media coverage of your speech Monday before the North American Agriculture Journalists and the Administration's plans to reverse declining trends in rural America.

As you may be aware, the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO) represents more than 525 small, rural communications carriers across the United States. Our members provide voice, broadband and video services to primarily rural communities.

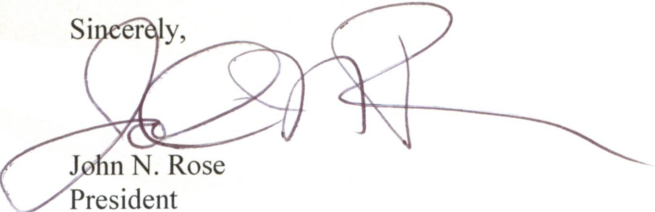
As the Administration prepares to address strategies to reverse trends in declining rural regions, OPASTCO believes that ensuring a robust high-speed broadband network is crucial to rural America's economic, education and health interests. The agriculture industry relies on a strong broadband network as much as consumers and businesses do on Main Street rural America.

Now, the staff of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has developed a proposal for broadband deployment support and regulation that will create a rural/urban digital divide and puts existing rural broadband networks at risk. This proposal not only creates uncertainty, it jeopardizes infrastructure investment, future debt equity loans for carriers, and the repayment of existing Rural Utility Service loans.

Communications providers that serve rural America have worked hard to develop access to high-speed broadband for its residential, agricultural and small business consumers. The FCC's broadband proposals contained in the National Broadband Plan are detrimental to the current and future broadband networks in rural communities and will not further the Administration's renaissance of rural America.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,


John N. Rose
President

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