

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 5, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, Southwest  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

We write today regarding our concerns with the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural eConnectivity Pilot Program's (ReConnect) scoring criteria, which includes so-called "net neutrality" commitments.

The buildout of broadband infrastructure, including to some of the most remote and rural areas of this country, has transformed our nation's economy and provided new opportunities for many Americans. The investment in broadband infrastructure by both small and large providers remains at an all-time high due to the light-touch regulatory approach taken by the federal government.

As you know, "net neutrality" restrictions have been subject to much debate in Congress and at the Federal Communications Commission, the agency that oversees our nation's telecommunications policy. Any effort to impose unnecessary "net neutrality" restrictions would be dangerous to our nation's dynamic broadband economy and threaten future investments in broadband infrastructure.

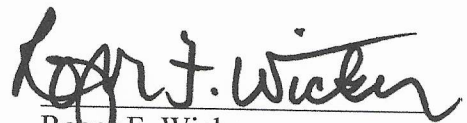
Further, it is deeply troubling that USDA is suggesting it has the authority much less the qualified staff and expertise to make determinations about "lawful Internet traffic." If USDA decides to make attempts at regulating the Internet absent authority from Congress, it would lead to tremendous legal and marketplace uncertainty.

Rather than attempting to impose monopoly-era regulations on broadband providers and politicizing the ReConnect program, we strongly urge you to reverse your decision to provide additional scoring points based on USDA's determination of what constitutes "net neutrality."

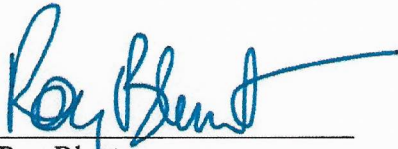
Sincerely,



John Thune  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Communications,  
Media, and Broadband  
United States Senate



Roger F. Wicker  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce,  
Science, and Transportation  
United States Senate



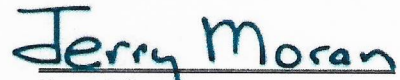
Roy Blunt  
United States Senator



Ted Cruz  
United States Senator



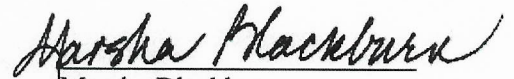
Deb Fischer  
United States Senator



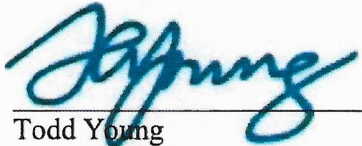
Jerry Moran  
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator



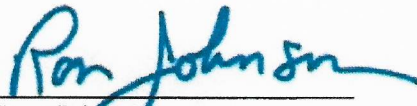
Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator



Todd Young  
United States Senator



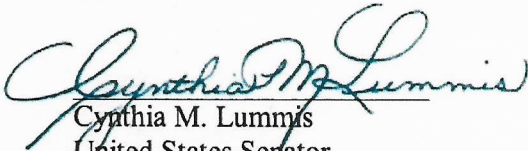
Mike Lee  
United States Senator



Ron Johnson  
United States Senator



Shelly Moore Capito  
United States Senator



Cynthia M. Lummis  
United States Senator