

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

May 12, 2010

Mr. Jonathan Adelstein  
Administrator  
United States Department of Agriculture  
Rural Utilities Service  
STOP 1590  
1400 Independence Ave., SW, Rm 5151  
Washington, DC 20250

Mr. Lawrence Strickling  
Assistant Secretary  
United States Department of Commerce  
National Telecommunications and  
Information Administration  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Administrator Adelstein and Assistant Secretary Strickling:

We are writing in support of several critical broadband infrastructure proposals submitted by Vermont organizations to the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) and the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunity Improvement Program (BTOP).

Each week our offices receive multiple pleas from Vermonters desperate for access to affordable, high-speed internet access. These constituents are disadvantaged compared to many Americans and citizens of countries around the world who enjoy exponentially faster internet access speeds at a fraction of the cost compared to rural Vermonters' access speeds and rates. Those with inadequate access to the internet suffer economically, socially and physically as advancements in e-commerce, telecommuting, telemedicine and e-learning become more and more pervasive.

Messages from constituents like those mentioned above, and a recognition by the President and Members of Congress that rural America remains underserved by our existing telecommunications infrastructure, resulted in the inclusion of \$7.2 billion in broadband infrastructure funding in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to build broadband infrastructure. This investment aimed to connect millions of Americans to the internet at internationally competitive speeds and rates better positioning them to compete in tomorrow's economy and aimed to put thousands of Americans to work in the telecommunications industry of today.

A recent University of Vermont Center for Rural Studies poll showed that only 69 percent of Vermonters have access to high-speed internet access. National data used to prepare the NTIA's own February 2010 *Digital Nation: 21<sup>st</sup> Century America's Progress Towards Universal Broadband Internet Access* reported that Vermont ranked 38<sup>th</sup> in the nation for broadband availability. Despite these appalling numbers, Vermont failed to receive a single Recovery Act-funded broadband infrastructure grant in Round 1. While our home state was fortunate to receive NTIA grants for broadband mapping and broadband aggregation, we feel it is vitally important that Vermont, one of the nation's most rural states with many underserved rural communities, benefit from the Recovery Act's broadband infrastructure program.

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A number of Vermont for-profit and non-profit organizations have submitted proposals to RUS BIP and NTIA BTOP. We wanted to bring your attention to these proposals in hopes that RUS and NTIA can help Vermont address its critical telecommunications infrastructure needs in Round 2.

Vermont NTIA Broadband Technology Opportunities Program Applicants

- **Vermont Electrical Cooperative:** A \$4.6 million proposal to connect 154 anchor institutions to a fiber network in Northern Vermont.
- **Vermont Telecommunications Authority:** A \$33.4 million proposal to create Vermont Fiber Link, a statewide, mid-mile fiber network increasing bandwidth and reducing broadband costs to state offices, healthcare institutions, schools and other critical customers.
- **Vermont Telephone Company:** A \$13.7 million proposal to create an open-network middle-mile hub-and-spoke fiber network to schools, colleges, public safety facilities, healthcare facilities, and telecommunications providers.

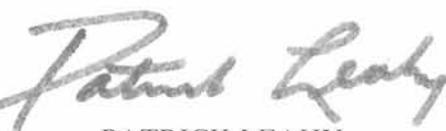
Vermont RUS Broadband Initiatives Program

- **East Central Vermont Fiber Network:** A \$44 million loan and grant proposal to build a universal, open-access, fiber-to-the-home system to 18 Vermont towns including libraries, town offices, schools, community facilities, households and businesses.
- **Vermont Telephone Company:** A \$118 million loan and grant proposal to create an open-network serving 61,497 Vermont premises comprising all 33,165 un-served households, with Tri-Band 4G/LTE mobile broadband, plus fiber-to-the-home to all VTel premises.
- **Waitsfield Champlain Valley Telecom:** A \$5.6 million loan and grant proposal to provide fiber-to-the-home technology and offer connection speeds between 5 and 100 Mbps.

We appreciate your fair and timely consideration of these proposals, and look forward to working with you to ensure Americans across the country have affordable high speed internet access as quickly as possible.

Should you have any questions about our support of these applications, please feel free to contact us directly.

Sincerely,



PATRICK LEAHY  
United States Senator



BERNIE SANDERS  
United States Senator



PETER WELCH  
United States Representative