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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

August 12, 2014

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

Your announcement last week that the Commission will be holding a series of public roundtables to discuss approaches to protecting an open Internet was a welcome and much-needed step. This is an issue of fundamental importance to free speech and economic growth in the United States and it is critical that meaningful rules are put in place that protect consumers and promote innovation. While the roundtables the Commission is holding in Washington will help to promote further public input, I strongly urge you to expand your listening sessions outside of the Beltway.

In July, I held a Senate Judiciary Committee field hearing in Vermont on the importance of protecting an open Internet. That hearing allowed the Committee to hear from voices that otherwise would not have had an opportunity to be heard in Washington. These voices included small business owners like Cabot Orton of the Vermont Country Store and Lisa Groeneveld of Logic Supply, Inc. Both of these companies are great Vermont success stories thanks to the equalizing power of the Internet.

Mr. Orton explained how the Vermont Country Store, which was founded in 1945, now relies on Internet sales for 40 percent of its business. This allows his company to keep all of its 450 employees in Vermont. Ms. Groeneveld's company, Logic Supply, which designs and manufactures industrial computers for sale to customers all over the world, relies on its website for all of its revenue. The Internet allows Logic Supply to have a global reach from its headquarters in South Burlington, Vermont. I found their perspectives to be incredibly valuable and relevant to the current net neutrality discussion.

Mr. Orton and Ms. Groeneveld are only two of the thousands of Vermonters who care deeply about the need to maintain an open Internet. Vermonters are not alone, as over a million people from across the country have submitted comments to the Commission in its open Internet proceeding. Most of them will not be able to come to Washington to participate in the roundtables that have been scheduled, but their voices are more important than industry lobbyists and Members of Congress. Holding roundtables across the country will help ensure that Americans have a meaningful opportunity to participate.

Sincerely,

PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator