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United States Senate

January 8, 2014

~~Jim Rokosch~~
Commissioner
Ravalli County
215 S 4th St Ste A
Hamilton, MT 59840-2703

BCC



Dear Jim,

I am writing to update you on my efforts to bring high-speed internet to rural homes and businesses in Montana.

For years, many folks in Ravalli County have not had access to affordable high-speed internet service, also known as broadband. Certain areas present unique challenges to expanding broadband infrastructure but I believe all Montanans should have access to affordable broadband services. High-speed internet connects folks to a global marketplace, which ultimately strengthens rural communities. The internet plays a vital role in many areas of our day-to-day lives, including our economy, education, health care and public safety, and Montanans should not be denied the opportunities the internet provides simply because they live in a rural area.

In recent years, Congress worked with the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) to create the Connect America Fund. This fund relies on a competitive bidding process to support to phone and internet carriers in under-served areas. Last year, the first round of Connect America funds helped to expand broadband services but a sizable portion of the fund went unused and many rural areas remained in the dark.

That is why I urged the FCC to proceed with another round of competition for Connect America Fund grants. The FCC agreed, and in December, CenturyLink was selected to help expand broadband in Ravalli County. This project is a smart investment in broadband infrastructure because it will boost economic development by promoting innovation and entrepreneurship right here in Montana.

Please don't hesitate to contact me at one of my offices listed below or online at <http://tester.senate.gov/contact>.

Sincerely,

Jon Tester
United States Senator

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