




**National Rural Electric
Cooperative Association**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

February 5, 2013

Glenn English
Chief Executive Officer

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

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

Thank you for your efforts to close the digital divide and to deliver broadband service to rural America. The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and our members share that goal and I believe that we have a great opportunity to work together to make those common broadband goals a reality.

Several NRECA member electric cooperatives are actively planning major investments in broadband for their communities. As you know, community development is in electric cooperatives' DNA and is consistent with NRECA's purpose. What could be more empowering than the provision of high speed broadband capability to our members' communities?

You and I well know that the economics of providing broadband to sparsely populated areas has deterred the major providers of broadband from investing in our rural communities. At the same time, these same major telecommunications and broadband providers have walked away from funding offered by the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC") to ease the financial burden of serving rural areas.

I propose that NRECA and your Department together approach the FCC to explore ways to deploy the Universal Service/Connect America funding to drive more broadband service into rural America. Together I believe we can ensure that funds are allocated to serve low density population areas that are not otherwise going to be served, and not subsidize otherwise affordable service areas. I firmly believe that if the major providers are unwilling to serve rural communities, it behooves us, as we did 75 years ago with electricity, to create a path for rural communities to do it themselves.

I look forward to discussing this with you at your earliest convenience to discuss further.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Glenn English", with a stylized, flowing script.

Glenn English

cc: Dallas Tonsager
John Padalino