



MARIPOSA COUNTY

Board of Supervisors • 209-966-3222



RESOLUTION - ACTION REQUESTED 2015-479

MEETING: October 6, 2015

TO: The Board of Supervisors

FROM: Rosemarie Smallcombe, District I Supervisor

RE: Approve a Letter of Support for an Initiative Undertaken by the California Emerging Technology Fund

RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION:

Approve a letter of support for an initiative undertaken by the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) and its partners to encourage the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to help close the Digital Divide, and authorize the Board of Supervisors Chair to sign the letter. The Board included support for universal broadband access, especially in rural areas, in its 2015 Legislative Platform.

Mariposa County's topography varies widely as does internet access, from good high speed access to dial up. Some areas are well served with broadband access; others are unserved. It is critical to Mariposa's economy that access to basic telecommunication services, especially broadband, be universally available. I therefore recommend that the Mariposa Board approve the attached letter. The first step in CETF's campaign is to establish an inclusive Broadband Lifeline Program that addresses the three primary barriers to broadband adoption: (1) Cost, (2) Relevance and (3) Digital literacy. The measures proposed include -

- Establishment of an affordable high-speed internet service plan for all low-income households offered by and through all broadband providers with sufficient speeds and a wireless modem for compatibility with school-issued devices
- Capitalization of an independent fund to support community based organizations, schools and libraries (as "trusted messengers") to assist in enrolling eligible low income households and participate in true public-private partnerships.
 - Amount of capitalization and length of time set according to goals for broadband adoption (e.g., 80% broadband adoption by 2020)
 - Administered through state regulatory commissions that opt in (a multi-state fund for the rest of the nation) with fund managers selected through an open, competitive process.

- Performance-based grants with accountability for results.
- Establishment of an oversight advisory body to ensure transparency and accountability with a broad base of stakeholders and community leaders knowledgeable about broadband adoption.

The second step is to encourage the FCC to impose a requirement that proposed corporate consolidations commit to improving and expanding affordable home internet service as a condition of approval of the merger.

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:

The Board has routinely approved letters of support for issues that they believe will benefit the citizens of Mariposa County.

ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

Do not approve the letter. Individual Board members may write their own letters of support for the letter of support which may not carry the weight of a letter from the entire Board.

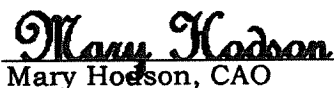
ATTACHMENTS:

IFAN Letter_to_FCC (DOC)

Mariposa_Wireline_Broadband Availability (PDF)

CAO RECOMMENDATION

Requested Action Recommended



Mary Hodson, CAO

9/30/2015

RESULT: ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]

MOVER: Marshall Long, District III Supervisor

SECONDER: John Carrier, District V Supervisor

AYES: Smallcombe, Jones, Long, Cann, Carrier

Mariposa County Board of Supervisors

District 1 ... ROSEMARIE SMALLCOMBE
District 2 MERLIN JONES
District 3 MARSHALL LONG
District 4 KEVIN CANN
District 5 JOHN CARRIER



MARY HODSON
County Administrative Officer

RENE LAROCHE
Clerk of the Board

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October 6, 2015

Chairman Tom Wheeler
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Broadband Lifeline Rate

Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization, WC Docket No. 11-42

Telecommunications Carriers Eligible for Universal Service Support, WC Docket No. 09-197

Connect America Fund, WC Docket No. 10-90

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioner Clyburn, Commissioner Pai,
Commissioner Rosenworcel, and Commissioner O'Rielly:

The Board of Supervisors of Mariposa County are committed to closing the Digital Divide because it is one of the most powerful strategies to help the next generation succeed in a competitive global economy. Access to affordable high-speed Internet at home is a vital tool to achieve this goal. We commend the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for establishing a visionary path to empower all Americans with high-speed Internet access in the National Broadband Plan and we support your announcements to provide a widely-available affordable broadband rate for all low-income households through a Broadband Lifeline Program.

We know that you understand the importance of technology today to empower low-income residents in poor neighborhoods and rural areas. More than 20% of all California households remain offline in this Digital Age and are being left behind at an accelerating pace—increasingly being disenfranchised from our democracy because so much government information and many public services are online. According to the 2015 Annual Survey on broadband adoption in California (sponsored by the California Emerging Technology Fund and conducted by the Field Research Corporation), the Digital Divide persists for disadvantaged communities with large percentages of households not connected at home—35% of low-income households (under \$20,000 annual income); 30% of Latino families (37% for Spanish-speaking households); and 41% of

people with disabilities. Yet, participation in daily life requires broadband access at home—job and college applications, school homework, healthcare coverage, workforce training, and education scholarships.

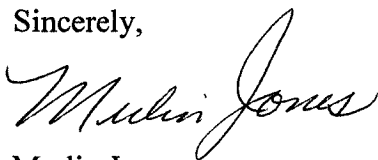
We also know that it takes a “trusted messenger” to reach offline households. Research shows that there are 3 primary barriers to broadband adoption: (1) Cost; (2) Relevance; and (3) Digital Literacy. An effective Broadband Lifeline Program must provide dedicated funding for community-based organizations (CBOs), schools and libraries to assist providers with in-language and in-culture outreach, digital literacy training, and sign-ups for subscriptions to successfully close the Digital Divide. Further, there must be transparency and accountability to achieve tangible results.

Therefore, we respectfully urge you to design a successful Broadband Lifeline Program by taking the following actions:

- Establish an affordable high-speed Internet service plan for all low-income households offered by and through all broadband providers (in the \$10/month range) with sufficient speeds and a wireless modem for compatibility with school-issued devices. A Broadband Lifeline Program should augment Telephone Lifeline and not force consumers to choose between the two necessary technologies and programs.
- Capitalize an independent fund to support CBOs, schools and libraries through performance-based grants to assist in enrolling eligible low-income households and participate in true public-private partnerships.
- Appoint an oversight advisory body to ensure transparency and accountability with a broad base of stakeholders and community leaders knowledgeable about broadband adoption.

We embrace the goal in the National Broadband Plan “to create a high-performance America—a more productive, creative, efficient America in which affordable broadband is available everywhere and everyone has the means and skills to use valuable broadband applications.” You have the opportunity to significantly move towards achieving this goal by enacting a workable Broadband Lifeline Program. We urge your bold action and we welcome the opportunity to work together to get all Californians and all Americans online.

Sincerely,



Merlin Jones
Mariposa County
Board of Supervisors Chair