

Hadley, Ryan E

From: Ron Raypole <ron.raypole@nobleremc.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 13, 2018 12:01 PM
To: Comments, Urc
Subject: IUSF-Broadband Study Comments - Noble REMC
Attachments: IURC Comment Letter on Broadband General Counsel Beth Heline Final.docx

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Dear Ms. Heline,

I have included a brief letter addressing our need for high-speed Broadband to rural Indiana communities.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Ron Raypole
President & CEO
Noble REMC
300 Weber Rd
Albion, IN 46701
260.636.2113
ron.raypole@nobleremc.com



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Noble REMC

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General Counsel Beth Heline
Re: IUSF – Broadband Study
Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission
101 West Washington Street, Ste. 1500 E
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Dear Ms. Heline,

I am writing to express our concerns over the lack of broadband internet services in rural Indiana, particularly Noble and Dekalb counties. The cable and phone companies refuse to provide broadband services outside of the incorporated city limits, as they see no incentive to serve these less-dense areas and no return on investment. We are seeing our youth move from rural Indiana to larger cities where they have access to broadband. We have real estate brokers telling us that housing is not selling without high speed internet.

We are at the point where Indiana's rural electric membership cooperatives, including Noble REMC, are investigating our role in broadband. As you know, it is a very expensive endeavor to get fiber to the home when you have less than eight homes per mile. If we continue to sit on our laurels hoping that someone else will eventually provide broadband to our rural communities, we will continue to see our population decline at unprecedented rates.

Rural electric cooperatives across the state, Noble REMC included, are contemplating taking the initiative to deploy rural broadband since the large telecoms and cable companies refuse to serve. We've done it before. We did it in the 1930s when investor-owned electric utilities refused to serve rural Indiana. We feel that broadband service today is as crucial as electricity was back then, and we may need to step up and make the investment to help these underserved and unserved areas.

We are asking the IURC along with state, federal and local governments to provide financial relief or assistance in getting broadband access to our local communities.

The IUSF was established by IURC to support rural incumbent local exchange carriers to continue deployment and maintenance of telephone service. We see broadband in rural Indiana in the same realm as telephone service back in its early stages. Is there a way to utilize this fund to assist us in deploying fiber to the homes in our unserved and underserved communities? The Connect America Fund supports only a few areas within our disadvantaged rural communities. The FCC unserved and underserved mapping is not the real picture in our area. Intermittent DSL is not adequate high-speed internet service in today's definition of broadband.

I appreciate your willingness to listen to our concerns.

Sincerely,

Ron Raypole
President & CEO