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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

September 25, 2013

TODD ROKITA  
4TH DISTRICT, INDIANA

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE  
ADMINISTRATION

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
AND THE WORKFORCE

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Maurita

Mooreville, IN

Dear

Thank you for expressing your concerns to me regarding broadband internet access in the Mooreville area. It is good to hear from you.

Since we met before my Mooreville Congress on Your Corner event on August 21, 2013, I have looked into the issue you raised regarding broadband internet service, dead zones, and census block data used to update the National Broadband Map. I appreciate your desire for broadband access and the efforts you have made to ensure your community has up-to-date infrastructure. I understand broadband internet availability is important to many Hoosiers, as it can greatly improve education, health care, and public safety.

As you know, the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) is working with telecommunication providers to increase broadband internet adoption across the country. They primarily encourage this modernization through grants provided via the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program and the State Broadband Initiative. The NTIA works with state-based entities and nonprofits to facilitate broadband adoption. To date, the NTIA has provided nearly \$3.3 million to the Indiana Office of Technology to facilitate broadband data collection.

Data collection helps the NTIA update the National Broadband Map, to give consumers and telecommunication providers a picture of broadband internet accessibility. Funding also goes to Indiana for the development and maintenance of [www.indianabroadbandmap.com](http://www.indianabroadbandmap.com). I understand your concern that these maps do not account for individual residences; rather data is reported by census block. Providers consider a census block "served" so long as one residence within the block has broadband access. Census blocks are less than two square miles, and represent the smallest geographic unit for which the U.S. Census collects aggregate data.

While I share your concern with census block data, the NTIA determined this was the most appropriate method of breaking down broadband adoption. It is not a perfect system, but attempting to assess broadband availability to every service address in the country would be a time consuming and costly task. While there is no legislation

pending before Congress to change the data collection standards for the National Broadband Map, there are bills aimed at increasing broadband adoption, especially in rural areas.

On April 18, 2013, Representative Chris Gibson of New York offered H.R. 1639, which would provide grants, in addition to loans and loan guarantees, for the costs of construction, improvement, and acquisition of facilities for broadband service in rural areas. On April 23, 2013, Representative Doris Matsui of California introduced H.R. 1685, the Broadband Adoption Act. This bill would enable low-income customers residing in urban and rural areas to purchase broadband service at reduced charges by reimbursing providers who participate in such a program. While I have not made final decisions regarding these bills, I will continue to study them.

You may also be interested to know that under H.R. 2642, the Federal Agriculture Reform and Risk Management Act, also known as the Farm Bill, an extension of rural broadband telecommunications infrastructure loan guarantees was included. I supported this bill, which passed the House of Representatives on July 11, 2013.

Ultimately, the dead zone issues you are experiencing should be resolved by your local telecommunications provider. I applaud you for applying pressure to your provider. As their customer, you have an expectation of services you pay for, and your provider should be responsive to your concerns. That said, I do not believe the federal government has a responsibility to ensure all Americans have access to broadband internet. While I share in your frustration, I encourage you to stay the course. If your provider does not address your concerns, you are always free to cut off your service, consider satellite providers, or consider moving to an area with reliable broadband access. I appreciate your input on this issue. Please be assured, should Congress consider future legislation regarding broadband internet adoption, I will keep your views in mind.

Again, thank you for contacting me, and please stay in touch.

Sincerely,



Todd Rokita  
Member of Congress

TR/tb