



Control Number: 50796



Item Number: 33

Addendum StartPage: 0



COUNTY JUDGE J.D. CLARK

Commissioners
Public Utility Commission of Texas
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Chairman Walker, Commissioner D'Andrea, and Commissioner Botkin,

First, thank you for your service during this challenging time for Texas and our nation.

As the County Judge for a largely rural county in Texas and as the current Chair for the National Association of Counties' Telecommunications and Technology Committee, I was concerned to wake up this morning and read a Texas Tribune article suggesting the Texas PUC has recently chosen to not properly fund the critical Texas Universal Service Fund. While I do not yet have all the details, I understand the PUC will revisit the issue later this week and wanted to quickly ensure the rural voices of Wise County were heard for two primary reasons outlined below.

First, any threat to funding that in any way encourages investment in rural networks where market forces would not fully ensure Texas' stated goal of universal service to all Texans is a concern. With the proverbial digital divide becoming more impactful during the ongoing pandemic, robust networks that can carry voice, data and/or wireless traffic are essential for new technologies such as telemedicine. Equally important is supporting and incentivizing the few companies who are willing to invest to serve those communities.

Next, as a former schoolteacher who remains greatly involved with mentoring our rural students who will someday be state leaders, connectivity is especially important to ensure these well-balanced students, their teachers and their working parents have access at home and school to the necessary telecommunications capabilities. Since great technology is useless without ubiquitous networks, the Texas Universal Service Fund is critical and we are experiencing it during this time more than ever.

In closing, I do appreciate each Commissioner's work and leadership for our great state, and I trust you will make tough decisions to keep rural Texans connected.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to call if you have any questions. I look forward to your action on this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J.D. Clark".

J.D. Clark
Wise County Judge