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Rural and Agriculture Council of America Urges Reconsideration of FCC's Business Data Services Proposal

Letter Warns of Harmful Consequences for Rural Communities Under BDS Proposal

(WASHINGTON) August 16, 2016 – The Rural and Agriculture Council of America (RACA), along with four partnering organizations, submitted a joint letter to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) last week, urging Chairman Tom Wheeler and the Commission to reconsider proposed regulation targeting the Business Data Services market.

The co-signers—including American Agri-Women, Intertribal Agriculture Council, United States Cattlemen's Association, and Women in Farm Economics—represent a cross-section of rural America, advocating for policy that will continue to support rural and farming communities across the country. The letter outlines the signers' concern that the Commission's proposed regulation will force cuts in an estimated \$1.4 billion of future investment in rural broadband. Reiterating the importance of that investment, the groups emphasize the significant ways in which rural communities would be harmed if the regulation is adopted.

"Without significant investment in broadband, economic development and job creation will be significantly hindered. Plus, the additional commerce, services and endless opportunities afforded by quality high-speed internet access will also be lost," the letter states.

Signers express concern not only for the significant impacts the regulation will impose on rural communities, but for the inaccurate data that the Commission used as a foundation to craft the proposal. RACA, in consultation with industry leaders, points out that the FCC's market data is outdated, painting a picture of the cable market as notably less saturated than it currently is. Considering how significantly outdated data could alter the impact that regulation could potentially bring, the signatories have asked the FCC to revisit the flawed foundation for their research, and review the merits of proposed regulation that is built off of outdated information.

Noting the creation of the White House Rural Council under the Obama Administration in 2011, the letter reminds the FCC of the positive steps that have been taken in the past years to protect

continued broadband investment in rural areas, and the importance of maintaining that goal for rural America's future growth.

"This council was created with a commitment to promoting and coordinating private-sector partnerships. One of the key objectives within the Council is to increase expansion of telecommunications. Private, public partnerships are essential to expanding high-speed internet access, yet this proposed rule takes a step backwards and will negatively impact needed investment and future work," the letter states.