

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Commission, on its own motion, to increase broadband adoption among low-income consumers through the development of a Nebraska broadband telephone assistance program.	Application No. NUSF-91
REPLY COMMENTS OF QWEST CORPORATION d/b/a CenturyLink QC and UNITED TELEPHONE COMPANY OF THE WEST d/b/a CENTURYLINK	

On August 13, 2013, the Nebraska Public Service Commission (“Commission”) opened the above referenced docket. The Commission sought comments from interested parties on the feasibility of creating a program to help low-income customers offset part of the monthly recurring cost of broadband subscribership, similar to the existing Nebraska Telephone Assistance Program (“NTAP”) that offsets part of the monthly cost of subscribing to voice telephone service for qualified low income subscribers. On September 30, 2013, several parties filed comments on the Commission’s proposal. Qwest Corporation d/b/a CenturyLink QC and United Telephone Company of the West d/b/a CenturyLink (collectively “CenturyLink”) respectfully provide these reply comments in response to those initial comments.

In the initial comments, some parties whole heartedly support the Commission’s proposal,¹ while others were steadfastly against it.² However, the majority of parties seemed

¹ See *In the Matter of the Commission, on its own motion, to increase broadband adoption among low income consumers through the development of a Nebraska broadband telephone assistance program*, Application No. NUSF-91, comments of the City of Lincoln, Center for People in Need, Cox Nebraska Telecom, LLC, and N.E. Colorado Cellular, Inc. d/b/a Viaero Wireless.

² See *In the Matter of the Commission, on its own motion, to increase broadband adoption among low income consumers through the development of a Nebraska broadband telephone assistance program*, Application No. NUSF-91, comments of Verizon.

to fall in the middle,³ with many encouraging the Commission to wait until the Federal Communications Commission's ("FCC") pilot programs are completed before moving forward.

CenturyLink agrees that the Commission should wait. In its initial comments, RIC stated

[T]he data that will be gathered from the [FCC's] Pilot Program will be essential to a determination by the Commission whether broadband adoption in Nebraska is only related to providing discounted broadband service rates or whether other variables such as digital literacy, equipment costs and the other factorsare prime determinants of broadband adoption. Delaying implementation of the Broadband Adoption Program is not just a matter of the Commission waiting for a "federal solution" to the broadband adoption issue, but is a matter of awaiting access to the data that will be provided from the various projects that have been funded by the FCC in the Pilot Program. This data and the analysis thereof should be of great value to the Commission in its evaluation of whether to proceed with the Broadband Adoption program in the near term.⁴

Citizens/Frontier is currently participating in one of the FCC's Pilot Programs in Ohio and also urges the Commission to wait before implementing a Broadband Assistance Program. "Frontier is not confident that this particular proposal by the Commission is likely to produce the hoped for results. Nebraska would be best served by assessing the results of the various FCC pilot projects after their completion."⁵

Several parties also commented that, should the Commission proceed with its Broadband Adoption Program, that the other programs under the Nebraska Universal Service Fund ("NUSF") umbrella, particularly the NUSF high cost program, should not be negatively affected. Windstream states, "The Commission, therefore, should ensure that no reforms to

³ See *In the Matter of the Commission, on its own motion, to increase broadband adoption among low income consumers through the development of a Nebraska broadband telephone assistance program*, Application No. NUSF-91, comments of Citizens Telecommunications Company of Nebraska d/b/a Frontier Communications of Nebraska ("Citizens/Frontier") and the Rural Independent Companies ("RIC").

⁴ RIC, page 14.

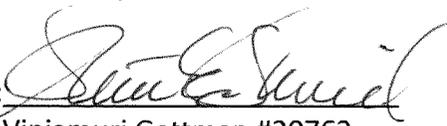
⁵ Citizens/Frontier, page 3.

NTAP negatively impact loop high cost funding or its pilot program to support provision of new broadband infrastructure (NUSF-77).”⁶ CenturyLink agrees.

In conclusion, while CenturyLink believes that expanding broadband subscribership among low-income consumers is a laudable goal, it recommends the Commission delay further consideration of the proposed Broadband Assistance Program until the FCC’s pilot programs have been completed and the data analyzed. In the meantime, the Commission can partner with broadband service providers that already have a low-income assistance program in place to help expand broadband subscribership among low-income consumers.

Dated October 25, 2013

Respectfully submitted,

By: 

Jill Vinjamuri Gettman #20763
Scott E. Daniel #10901
GETTMAN & MILLS LLP
10250 Regency Circle Suite 350
Omaha, NE 68114
(402) 320-6000
(402) 391-6500 (fax)
jgettman@gettmanmills.com

William E. Hendricks
CENTURYLINK
902 Wasco Street
Hood River, OR 97031
(541) 387-9439
tre.hendricks@centurylink.com

⁶ See *In the Matter of the Commission, on its own motion, to increase broadband adoption among low income consumers through the development of a Nebraska broadband telephone assistance program*, Application No. NUSF-91, comments of Windstream, page 1.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

The undersigned hereby certifies that on the 25th day of October, 2013, a true and correct copy of the Reply Comments of Qwest Corporation dba CenturyLink QC and United Telephone Company of the West dba CenturyLink were provided to the following interested persons as follows:

Via hand-delivery to:

Steve Meradith, Executive Director
Nebraska Public Service Commission
300 Atrium Building
1200 N Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

Electronically mail to the following:

Brandy Zierott : Brandy.Zierott@nebraska.gov
Sue Vanicek: sue.vanicek@nebraska.gov

Katherine Vogel
Brooks, Pansing Brooks, PC, LLO
1248 O Street, Suite 984
Lincoln, NE 68508
KVogel@brookspanlaw.com

Scott Bohler
Manager, Government and External Affairs
Frontier Communications
2378 Wilshire Boulevard
Mound, MN 55364
Scott.Bohler@FTR.com

Jeffrey Kirkpatrick
The City of Lincoln
555 South 10th Street, Suite 300
Lincoln, NE 68508
jkirkpatrick@lincoln.ne.gov

Deonne Bruning PC LLO
2901 Bonacum Drive
Lincoln, NE 68502
deonnebruning@neb.rr.com

Paul M. Schudel
Woods & Aitken LLP
301 South 13th Street, Suite 500
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508
PSchudel@woodsaitken.com

Troy Kirk
Rembolt Ludtke Law Firm
1201 Lincoln Mall - Ste 102
Lincoln NE 68508
TKirk@remboltlawfirm.com

William Hunt
dishNET Wireline
9601 S Meridian Blvd.
Englewood, CO 80112
Williamp.hunt@dish.com

Steve Seglin
Crosby Guenzel, LLP
134 South 13th Street #400
Lincoln, NE 68508
SGS@cosbylawfirm.com

Matthew Feil
Senior Counsel, Windstream
1201 West Peachtree Street, Suite 610
Atlanta, GA 30309
Matthew.feil@windstream.com



Scott E. Daniel