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Universal service

Comments filed on future of Universal Service Fund

Comments were filed on Feb. 17, 2022, on the [notice of inquiry](#) initiating a proceeding on the future of the Universal Service Fund in light of the broadband investments in the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#). [NTCA](#) suggested the commission: engage in interagency coordination with federal and state partners; take steps to achieve and sustain universal service; reinvigorate the Lifeline Program by providing consumers with flexibility in how they use that support; promote coordination in administering the E-rate and Rural Health Care programs; and include broadband revenues in the contribution base. [WTA](#) urged the commission to have its high-cost fund program prefer and support FTTH as the most scalable and future proof technology alternative. WTA also said reform of the USF contributions system is necessary and suggested inclusion of broadband revenues in the contributions base, or the collection of USF contributions from companies that impose substantial costs upon broadband networks. [JSI](#) recommended the FCC: coordinate the use of grant funds with existing high-cost universal service support; reinforce the importance of ETC designation for providers seeking universal service; revisit the distribution of the remaining RDOF budget to better address deployment needs in rural areas; ensure levels of universal service support to construct and maintain rural networks; and engage in meaningful universal service contribution reform in 2022. [Vantage Point Solutions](#) said the broadband networks in place will require maintenance and support, and networks supported by USF must be scalable as customer usage patterns will evolve over the next decade. It also said the effort for coordination between agencies and programs is a challenge, considering the number of recent programs and the level of funding approved, and offered recommendations for five key metrics that should be included in the reports for the states and territories. **Replies are due March 17, 2022.** [all comments available](#)

Enforcement Bureau proposes fine for failure to file telecommunications reporting worksheets

The Enforcement Bureau issued a [notice of apparent liability](#) for forfeiture on Feb. 17, 2022, to IK Communications for failure to file six annual telecommunications reporting worksheets between April 1, 2016, and April 1, 2021. The bureau asserted IK did not respond to its letter of inquiry on compliance with filing and contribution requirements, and proposed a penalty of \$100,000.

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Broadband

USDA extends application deadline for ReConnect Program

U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Under Secretary Xochitl Torres Small [announced](#) an extension of the application deadline for the ReConnect Program from Feb. 22, 2022, to March 9, 2022. Up to \$1.15 billion in loans and grants from the program will be made available to expand the availability of broadband in rural areas. To be eligible for funding, an applicant must serve an area without broadband service at speeds of 100/20 Mbps and commit to building facilities capable of providing broadband service at speeds of 100 Mbps to every location in its proposed service area. The USDA said in the coming months it plans to begin making available an additional \$2 billion in rural broadband funding allocated to USDA by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Members appointed to Precision Ag Connectivity task force

The FCC issued a [public notice](#) on Feb. 17, 2022, announcing Chairwoman Rosenworcel, in consultation with USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, appointed working group members to serve on the Task Force for Reviewing the Connectivity and Technology Needs of Precision Agriculture in the United States. The following working groups will assist the task force in carrying out its work: Mapping and Analyzing Connectivity on Agricultural Lands; Examining Current and Future Connectivity Demand for Precision Agriculture; Encouraging Adoption of Precision Agriculture and Availability of High-Quality Jobs on Connected Farms; and Accelerating Broadband Deployment on Unserved Agricultural Lands. A list of task force working group members appointed is attached to the public notice.

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Robocalls

Wireline bureau addresses exemptions to STIR/SHAKEN

The Wireline Competition Bureau issued an [order](#) on Feb. 17, 2022, addressing the status of seven voice service providers [granted an exemption](#) in December 2020 from the caller ID authentication requirements. The bureau said it found Bandwidth and Vonage did not achieve full implementation of the STIR/SHAKEN authentication framework and therefore lose their exemptions from Section 64.6301 and referred them to the Enforcement Bureau for possible enforcement action. The bureau said the remaining providers that received an exemption in December 2020 remain exempt. [news release](#)

Rosenworcel announces new federal-state partnerships to combat robocalls

Chairwoman Rosenworcel [announced](#) on Feb. 17, 2022, the latest additions to federal-state partnerships to combat robocalls. The FCC also announced it had signed new robocall enforcement MOUs with Colorado and Vermont, bringing the total of state-federal partnerships to 16 with the goal of extending this level of collaboration to every state and territory.

FCC sends cease-and-desist letters to providers facilitating illegal robocalls

The FCC [announced](#) on Feb. 17, 2022, it sent cease-and-desist letters to 15 voice service providers suspected of facilitating illegal robocall traffic. The FCC said all the providers responded and committed to take actions to stop the flow of robocalls on their networks.

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Open meeting

FCC releases item from February open meeting agenda

The FCC [deleted](#) the following item listed on the Feb. 18, 2022 open meeting [agenda](#): a [report and order](#) to eliminate or amend outmoded or unnecessary broadcast technical rules. The item has been adopted and released.

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