



Southwest Region School District

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Aleknagik

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New Stuyahok

Portage Creek

Togiak

Twin Hills

March 30, 2015

Dear Alaska Senate Finance Committee:

Southwest Region Schools encourages you to reinstate the Broadband Assistance Grant for FY16 and FY17, as the original legislation intended.

Southwest Region Schools received grant assistance for our school broadband services this spring, without which our small schools would have remained at 2 Mbps and our large schools at 4 Mbps. Our lack of high-speed broadband to date has not only restricted use of teacher resources and student learning opportunities, but also recently negatively impacted our capacity to implement the new required online state assessments during the AMP It Up Day in January.

The FCC now defines high-speed broadband as 100 Mbps per 1,000 users or a minimum of 25 Mbps download speeds. Prior to our award this spring, our district had less than 60 Mbps per 1,000 users and no school with more than 4 Mbps download speeds. Without the Broadband Assistance Grant, Southwest Region Schools will have no choice but to return to those previous low levels of service by July 1st this year, thus wasting the staff time and effort put into implementing the Broadband Assistance Grant goal of 10 Mbps speeds into every school.

Moreover, when we accepted the Broadband Assistance Grant for FY15, we were obligated by the rules of the award to apply for E-Rate funding for FY16 in amounts that we cannot pay without the Broadband Assistance Grant revenue. To now cut the Broadband Assistance Grant leaves us in an untenable position with regards to our E-Rate funding requests for FY16.

As a district with a 90% E-Rate subsidy, for every dollar Southwest Region Schools invests in broadband access, we receive an additional nine dollars in E-Rate support. Without the \$171 thousand dollars in grant assistance Southwest Region Schools is eligible for, we will be unable to accept the \$1.5 million E-Rate funding request that it would have supported. The Broadband Assistance Grant is a sound investment in Alaskan schools, and we reiterate our request that you reinstate it.

Sincerely,

Lester E. Parks
Technology Coordinator
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