

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 14

IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA

THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY REPRESENTATIVES EDGMON, Fansler, Tuck, Kito, Westlake, Spohnholz, Guttenberg, Drummond, Parish, Gara, Tarr

Introduced: 3/6/17

Referred: Labor and Commerce

A RESOLUTION

1 **Urging the Federal Communications Commission to increase the Rural Health Care**
2 **Program budget sufficiently to adjust for inflation, advances in technology and the**
3 **services available with increased broadband, and the increase in demand for**
4 **broadband-based services and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to**
5 **future funding years, ensuring that rural communities in the state continue to have**
6 **access to affordable broadband telehealth services.**

7 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

8 **WHEREAS** the Federal Communication Commission's Rural Health Care Program is
9 essential in enabling providers to deliver affordable telehealth services in the rural
10 communities of the state; and

11 **WHEREAS** the Rural Health Care Program budget has remained static for 20 years,
12 and the current \$400,000,000 budget remains at the initial level set in 1997, despite inflation,
13 advances in technology, and increased demand for services; and

14 **WHEREAS** the Federal Communications Commission recently updated the E-rate

1 budget for schools, from \$2,250,000,000 in 1997 to \$3,940,000,000 in 2015, and indexed it
2 for inflation, reflecting increases in demand; and

3 **WHEREAS** the Federal Communications Commission expects that demand may
4 exceed the cap for the first time in 2017, and an equivalent budget today, adjusted for
5 inflation, would be approximately \$600,000,000; and

6 **WHEREAS**, in 2015, state rural health care providers received more than
7 \$82,000,000, 20.5 percent of the total budget, in rural health care support, an increase of 35
8 percent, in dollars, from 2014; and

9 **WHEREAS** rural health care support enables telehealth services to be provided that
10 dramatically improve access to care, including mental and behavioral health care and
11 substance abuse services; accelerate diagnosis and treatment; avoid unnecessary medivacs;
12 and expand local treatment options; and

13 **WHEREAS** the state has no funding obligation to the Rural Health Care Universal
14 Service Support Fund;

15 **BE IT RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the Federal
16 Communications Commission to increase the Rural Health Care Program budget sufficiently
17 to adjust for inflation, advances in technology and the services available with increased
18 broadband, and the increase in demand for broadband-based services; and be it

19 **FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Alaska State Legislature urges the Federal
20 Communications Commission to index the Rural Health Care Program budget for inflation
21 and provide for any unused funds to be carried forward to future funding years, ensuring that
22 rural communities in the state continue to have access to affordable broadband telehealth
23 services, critical for improving access to care.

24 **COPIES** of this resolution shall be sent to Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary, Federal
25 Communications Commission; and the Honorable Lisa Murkowski and the Honorable Dan
26 Sullivan, U.S. Senators, and the Honorable Don Young, U.S. Representative, members of the
27 Alaska delegation in Congress.