

February 25, 2022

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Re: Broadband in Rural Alaska Must Become a Priority

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

This week, the National Congress of American Indians passed resolution #ECWS-22-011 (attached). Our resolution called on the NTIA to expedite grant review and award processing for the Tribal Connectivity grant applications because our construction window in rural Alaska is short – generally May through September - and this funding is critical for new broadband infrastructure. This letter is to amplify and expand upon this resolution.

Our villages need affordable broadband now, not five or ten years from now. Forcing us into the same one-size-fits-all terrestrial fiber bucket with the Lower 48 states won't get us there soon enough. We need the flexibility to design our own solutions to meet our own unique needs, not those of the incumbent telcos. To be clear, we welcome fiber where it makes technical and economic sense, but rural Alaska is so vast and the terrain too extreme for a singular solution. Rather, we need the flexibility to add LEO and GEO HTS satellites to the mix where we believe it makes sense. With this approach, we can have a middle mile option that provides coverage over all of Alaska from the first day of deployment. Every rural village, no matter how remote or how few people live there, will have access to broadband the quickest way possible. The Akiak Native community is using this technology and the residents are very happy.¹

Our political challenges at the State level have been stacked for years with empty promises and no one seems to care. In the 2014 Alaska Broadband Plan, this benchmark was set: "100% of Alaskan households and businesses would have 100/100 by 2020". In the 2019 Alaska Broadband Plan, this benchmark was set: "100% of Alaskan households and businesses would have 100/100 by 2024". Promises were made, billions were spent, and few Alaska Native villages have seen broadband extended into their communities. Recently, the Governor's Alaska Broadband Task Force set a new goal "100% of Alaskan households and businesses shall have access to 100/20 within 5 years." We're not holding our breath this time.

While three Federal agencies have multiple broadband funding plans, nothing has changed in terms of fiber middle mile buildout to the rural villages. Currently, Alaska telecoms bring in almost \$400M per year considering all funding sources and most of that is spent on user subsidies. Over the last 5 years, that's nearly \$2B and they have \$2B more coming. It's important to recognize that what the Alaska telecoms have been doing in Alaska is not working. Yet they have been successful in blocking our access to other technologies that will quickly deliver middle mile faster and more affordably to preserve their monopoly hold on the state.

¹ Retrieved from: https://www.frontiersman.com/akiak-village-goes-live-with-its-new-satellite-connection-to-broadband-high-speed-internet/article_5ddfc682-3213-11ec-bd49-973201d23f43.html

Today, there are more than 240 rural Alaska communities that are considered unserved² (no service or less than 25/3), 36.3% of rural Alaskans have no wired broadband service³ (~100,000 residents), and almost 70% of Alaska schools do not meet the FCC benchmark of 1 Mbps for every student.⁴ What your agency and other agencies are doing in Alaska is not helping close the digital divide.

We are tired of being pushed out of the room, while Alaska telecoms have been padding their pockets for decades. This is about basic, critical infrastructure in our villages. Hear our collective voice – the Federal infrastructure funds that have been appropriated for rural broadband present a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to solve a massive problem in rural Alaska. It should bring our villages affordable and fast broadband so that no Alaskan is left behind. Rural Alaska needs the flexibility to solve its unique challenges with a complement of technologies. We will appreciate your making this a top priority and bringing our applications forward for expeditious action along these lines.

Sincerely,



Chief Mike Williams
Akiak Native Community
Area VP of National Congress of American Indians
Chairman of Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Consortium

Signing as an Authorized Representative for:

Akiachak Native Community
Akiak Native Community
Asa'carsarmiut Tribe
Kasigluk Traditional Elders Council
Native Village of Chuathbaluk
Native Village of Hooper Bay
Native Village of Kwinhagek
Native Village of Napakiak
Native Village of Napaskiak
Native Village of Tuntutuliak
Nunakauyarmiut Tribe (Toksook Bay)
Organized Village of Kwethluk
Pilot Station Traditional Village
Tuluksak Native Community
Village of Atmautluak
Village of Chefomak
Village of Lower Kalskag

² Retrieved from: <https://indd.adobe.com/view/42ddcfe3-5ea9-4bcb-bd09-a71bcb63869a>, page 15

³ Retrieved from: <https://www.fcc.gov/reports-research/reports/broadband-progress-reports/2020-broadband-deployment-report>, issued 1.19.21, page 57

⁴ Retrieved from: [https://connectk12.org/states/AK/districts?bandwidth\[max\]=0.9999](https://connectk12.org/states/AK/districts?bandwidth[max]=0.9999)



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #ECWS-22-011

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Quinault Indian Nation

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Akiak Native Community (IRA)

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SOUTHWEST
Joe Garcia
Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo

WESTERN
Bernadine Burnette
Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Dante Desiderio
Sappony

NCAI HEADQUARTERS
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Washington, DC 20005
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www.ncai.org

TITLE: Calling on Federal Agencies to Expedite Grant Review and Award Processing for Critical 2022 Tribal Infrastructure Projects, Particularly in Areas with Limited Construction Windows

WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, Tribal Nations from across Indian Country have applied for billions of dollars in federal grants for infrastructure projects that were scheduled to start in 2022, and the processing of those grants has been delayed by federal agencies; and

WHEREAS, expediting the review process and funding of these federal grants are essential to deliver new critical infrastructure, including affordable broadband vital to the health, economy, education, and well-being of our tribal citizens across all of Indian Country; and

WHEREAS, the Akiak Native Community in Alaska, through a nonprofit tribal organization, has applied for hundreds of millions of dollars in federal grants to conduct tribal infrastructure projects that start in 2022; and

WHEREAS, without any roads connecting Akiak and the other 55 Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Tribal communities to the rest of Alaska, long lead times are required to order and transport (only air or barge) material and equipment needed for infrastructure projects to remote SW Alaska; and

WHEREAS, expediting review is even more important for Alaska Native Villages, like the Akiak Native Community, whose construction season is limited to four months or 25 percent of the year and, if that short window is missed in 2022, the majority of critical infrastructure work and benefits to Alaska tribal communities will have to wait until 2023; and

WHEREAS, delays by federal agencies in processing grant applications and awards jeopardize the delivery of critical infrastructure projects for all Tribal Nations in 2022; and

WHEREAS, tribal infrastructure applications and awards are currently delayed for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (NTIA- TBCP), U.S. Department of the Treasury Capital Projects Fund (Treasury - CPF), and at other federal agencies.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) calls upon the federal agencies, including the National Telecommunications and Information Administration Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (NTIA- TBCP), U.S. Department of the Treasury Capital Projects Fund (Treasury - CPF), to accelerate their grant review and award processing for critical 2022 infrastructure, especially for Native communities in Alaska and other areas with short windows for infrastructure construction; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Executive Committee at the Executive Council Winter Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held February 13-14, 2022, with a quorum present.



Fawn Sharp, President

ATTEST:



Stephen Roe Lewis, Recording Secretary



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www.akvillage.com, e-mail: info@akvillage.com

March 2, 2022

Gina Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue. NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

Alaska Village Initiatives represents Alaska Native Tribal leaders from some of the most remote villages in America. Our people know how to live and subsist despite not being connected to the modern infrastructure enjoyed by most Alaskans. Because of the Tribal Broadband Act, tribes finally have an opportunity to quickly make high-speed connectivity a reality, improving education, healthcare, and employment opportunities for our families. Tribes have invested considerable time and resources to develop broadband infrastructure projects that utilize 2.5 Ghz fixed wireless and new satellite middle mile applications serving Alaska, including the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite coverage via its Polar orbit. We believe this is the best solution for our villages, and with the help of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP), being administered by the NTIA, we are ready to complete these projects during the next 12 to 18 months. We are very concerned, however, that these funding decisions will be made with a bias toward fiber, technology that could take another generation or two to implement.

Timing is important to us because Rural Alaska has gone far too long without the benefits of broadband. A sense of urgency in bringing broadband to tribal lands is also a component of the TBCP itself: "The ACT requires eligible entities to complete their projects within one year of their receipt of grant funds." Even though exceptions to this provision can be made at the discretion of the Assistant Secretary, we selected proven technologies that are permissible under the Act and achievable within the one-year requirement.

Our chosen broadband solution has already been successfully implemented in Akiak, a remote village of less than 500 with about half under the age of 18. Engineering, buildout, testing and activation occurred during a six-month period. Today, the people of Akiak are enjoying broadband benefits. This tribal-owned and operated network is offering a residential 25/3 Mbps plan priced at under \$100 per month; with plans to expand the offering to a 50/5 Mbps plan. The village of Unalakleet has begun implementation of the same technology to achieve broadband connectivity this fall.

The lingering pandemic has underscored just how disadvantaged rural Alaska is without broadband access and that we are indeed at the very bottom of the digital divide. Most Americans mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 by increasing reliance and use of the internet. In our villages, we have no broadband that allows our children to utilize online classes

while school facilities are locked down, nor to help us address the increasing health and safety issues in the pandemic environment, such as telehealth support for our basic village clinics.

I respectfully request that the NTIA require that funding administrators approve grant applications based on the solutions and technology selected by tribal applicants – solutions informed by the geography, engineering studies, and needs of our own people. Using cookie cutter approach that ignores the wishes of tribal governments, in a place as vast and diverse as Alaska, is unwise, especially when the ACT grants us the autonomy and ability to acquire and build out our own broadband solutions.

I also ask that funding decisions be made as quickly as possible in order to take advantage of this year's very short window of opportunity to transport the necessary equipment to complete these projects to our villages. The last scheduled barge service to our regions will depart sometime in August. To avoid having to go another year without broadband access, we must begin ordering and transporting equipment as soon as possible.

Our chosen path is one that will allow a child entering kindergarten this year to access greater education content, and all our residents to receive better healthcare. The apparent path favored by those allocating available funding would likely not benefit that same child until high school or later. We are simply asking for the ability to choose our own path, so we can better connect our people to the world.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. R. Parker', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Charles R. Parker
President/CEO

**NATIVE VILLAGE OF HAMILTON
P.O BOX 20248
KOTLIK, ALASKA 99620
(907)899-2160 / 2161**

Honorable Gina M. Raimondo,
Secretary of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

We are Alaska Native Tribal leaders from some of the most remote villages in America. Our people know how to live and subsist despite not being connected to the modern infrastructure enjoyed by most Alaskans. Because of the Tribal Broadband Act, we finally have an opportunity to quickly make high-speed connectivity a reality, improving our families' education healthcare, and employment opportunities. We have invested considerable time and resources to develop broadband infrastructure projects that utilize 2.5 GHz fixed wireless and new satellite middle earth applications serving Alaska, including the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite coverage via its Polar orbit. We believe this is the best solution for our villages, and with the help of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP) being administered by the NTIA, we are ready to complete these projects during the next 12 to 18 months. However, we are very concerned that these funding decisions will be made with a bias toward fiber, technology that could take another generation or two to implement.

Timing is critical to us because we have gone far too long without the benefit of broadband. A sense of urgency in bringing broadband to tribal lands is also a component of the TBCP itself: "The Act requires eligible entities to complete their projects within one year of their receipt of grant funds." Even though exceptions to this provision can be made at the discretion of the Assistant Secretary, we selected proven technologies that are permissible under the Act and achievable within the one-year requirement.

Our chosen broadband solution has already been successfully implemented in Akiak, a remote village of less than 500, with about half of its residents under 18. Engineering, buildout, testing and activation occurred during a six-month period. Today, the people of Akiak are enjoying broadband benefits. This tribal-owned and operated network is offering a residential 25/3 Mbps plan priced at under \$100 per month, with plans to expand the offering to a 50/5 Mbps plan within the next few months. In addition, the village of Unalakleet has begun implementing the same technology to achieve broadband connectivity this fall.

The lingering pandemic has underscored just how disadvantaged we are without broadband access and that we are indeed at the very bottom of the digital divide. Most Americans mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 by increasing reliance and use of the internet. Yet, in our villages, we have no broadband that allows our children to utilize online classes while school facilities are locked down, nor to help us address the increasing health and safety issues in the pandemic environment, such as telehealth support for our basic village clinics.

We respectfully request that NTIA require that funding administrators approve grant applications based on the solutions and technology selected by tribal applicants – solution informed by our own people's geography, engineering studies, and needs. Using a cookie-cutter approach that ignores the wishes of tribal governments in a place as vast and diverse as Alaska is unwise, especially when the Act grants us the autonomy and ability to acquire and build out our own broadband solutions.

We also ask that funding decisions be made as quickly as possible o take advantage of this year's very short window of opportunity to transport the necessary equipment to complete these projects to our villages. The last scheduled barge service to our region will depart sometime in August. Therefore, to avoid going another year without broadband access, we must begin ordering and transporting equipment as soon as possible.

Our chosen path will allow a child entering kindergarten this year to access more excellent educational content and all our residents to receive better healthcare. The apparent path favored by those allocating available funding would likely not benefit that same child until high school or later. We are simply asking to choose our own path to connect our people to the world better.

Respectfully,



Edward Williams,
Secretary

cc: Senator Lisa Murkowski
Senator Daniel S. Sullivan
Congressman Don Young
Governor Mike Dunleavy

March 7, 2022

Honorable Gina M. Raimondo,
Secretary of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

We are Alaska Native Tribal leaders from some of the most remote villages in America. Our people know how to live and subsist despite not being connected to the modern infrastructure enjoyed by most Alaskans. Because of the Tribal Broadband Act, we finally have an opportunity to *quickly* make high-speed connectivity a reality, improving our families' education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. We have invested considerable time and resources to develop broadband infrastructure projects that utilize 2.5 GHz fixed wireless and new satellite middle mile applications serving Alaska, including the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite coverage via its Polar orbit. We believe this is the best solution for our villages, and with the help of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP) being administered by the NTIA, we are ready to complete these projects during the next 12 to 18 months. However, we are very concerned that these funding decisions will be made with a bias toward fiber, technology that could take another generation or two to implement.

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Respectfully,

Ellen Napoleon, President, Native Village of Paimiut

J.J. Orloff, Tribal Administrator, Native Village of Afognak

Charlene Nollner, Tribal Administrator, Native Village of Gakona

Copy to: Senator Lisa Murkowski

Senator Daniel S. Sullivan

Congressman Don Young

Governor Mike Dunleavy



PHONE (907) 847-2207
FAX (907) 847-2307

PO Box 50
LARSEN BAY
ALASKA 99624

March 4, 2022

Honorable Gina M. Raimondo,
Secretary of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

We are Alaska Native Tribal leaders from some of the most remote villages in America. Our people know how to live and subsist despite not being connected to the modern infrastructure enjoyed by most Alaskans. Because of the Tribal Broadband Act, we finally have an opportunity to *quickly* make high-speed connectivity a reality, improving our families' education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. We have invested considerable time and resources to develop broadband infrastructure projects that utilize 2.5 GHz fixed wireless and new satellite middle mile applications serving Alaska, including the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite coverage via its Polar orbit. We believe this is the best solution for our villages, and with the help of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP) being administered by the NTIA, we are ready to complete these projects during the next 12 to 18 months. However, we are very concerned that these funding decisions will be made with a bias toward fiber, technology that could take another generation or two to implement.

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The lingering pandemic has underscored just how disadvantaged we are without broadband access and that we are indeed at the very bottom of the digital divide. Most Americans mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 by increasing reliance and use of the internet. Yet, in our villages, we have no broadband that allows our children to utilize online classes while school facilities are locked down, nor

to help us address the increasing health and safety issues in the pandemic environment, such as telehealth support for our basic village clinics.

We respectfully request that NTIA require that funding administrators approve grant applications based on the solutions and technology selected by tribal applicants - solutions informed by our own people's geography, engineering studies, and needs. Using a cookie-cutter approach that ignores the wishes of tribal governments in a place as vast and diverse as Alaska is unwise, especially when the Act grants us the autonomy and ability to acquire and build out our own broadband solutions.

We also ask that funding decisions be made as quickly as possible to take advantage of this year's very short window of opportunity to transport the necessary equipment to complete these projects to our villages. The last scheduled barge service to our region will depart sometime in August. Therefore, to avoid going another year without broadband access, we must begin ordering and transporting equipment as soon as possible.

Our chosen path will allow a child entering kindergarten this year to access more excellent educational content and all our residents to receive better healthcare. The apparent path favored by those allocating available funding would likely not benefit that same child until high school or later. We are simply asking to choose our own path to connect our people to the world better.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Henson", written over a horizontal line.

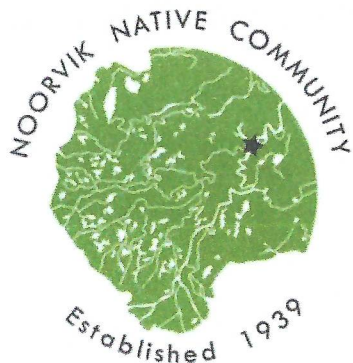
Richard Henson, President

Copy to: Senator Lisa Murkowski

Senator Daniel S. Sullivan

Congressman Don Young

Governor Mike Dunleavy



HERITAGE of the KUUNMIUT INUIT

P.O. Box 209
203 Northwind Drive
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February 28, 2022

Honorable Gina M. Raimondo,
Secretary of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Honorable Secretary Raimondo,

We are Alaska Native Tribal leaders from some of the most remote villages in America. Our people know how to live and subsist despite not being connected to the modern infrastructure enjoyed by most Alaskans. Because of the Tribal Broadband Act, we finally have an opportunity to quickly make high-speed connectivity a reality, improving our families' education, healthcare and employment opportunities. We have invested considerable time and resources to develop broadband infrastructure projects that utilize 2.5 GHz fixed wireless and new satellite coverage via its Polar orbit. We believe this is the best solution for our villages and with the help of the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP) being administered by the NTIA, we are ready to complete these projects during the next 12 to 18 months. However, we are very concerned that these funding decisions will be made with a bias toward fiber, technology that could take another generation or two to implement.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Wilbur M. Howarth Sr.".

Wilbur Howarth, Sr,
President, Noorvik IRA Council

Cc: Honorable Senator Lisa Murkowski
Honorable Daniel S. Sullivan
Congressman Don Young
Governor Mike Dunleavy
files

February 24, 2022

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Re: Support of Next Generation Satellite and Last Mile Tribal Wireless Broadband for Rural Alaska

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

I serve as the Chairman of Alaska Tribal Spectrum, a tribal organization representing the broadband needs for 103 tribal member communities. I am writing to encourage you to ensure that last mile wireless and next generation satellite middle mile technology solutions are a part of current and future awards at NTIA.

After careful consideration, I believe that it is imperative that the NTIA provide bold leadership by funding tribal applications that support scalable solutions that use tribal 2.5ghz wireless and next generation high performance satellites.

Up until the cell phone revolution no one had better telecommunication systems than the United States. However, once next generation cell phone technologies were made available, many countries that did not have adequate baseline telecommunications infrastructure were able to leapfrog the United States because they did not have to invest in copper and traditional infrastructure. Instead, they were able to put up cell towers and many nations then had much more advanced telephone systems than the US. The US had to struggle to catch up.

We are now facing an inflection point where the same thing is like to happen with next generation broadband systems. Our most rural communities in Alaska that lack almost all basic infrastructure are the perfect place to deploy these leading last mile wireless and middle mile satellite technologies. We have the opportunity to not only deploy these advanced capabilities to immediately bring our most remote villages into the 21st century, but also to prove out the technology while saving billions of dollars in unnecessary fiber buildout.

For Alaska, the federal governments rapid investment here may pay tremendous dividends to the US taxpayer in the years and decades to come.

Trusted organizations like the Alaska Tribal Administrators have endorsed new approaches as evidence by their recently published Opinion piece which is attached for your reference. The article speaks to the need for a satellite solution in Alaska as the only solution that can be successful in reaching these unserved populations and how the State and Federal governments bias for fiber only is hurting Alaska and not fulfilling the needs of our rural tribal communities.

We encourage you to listen to our tribal voices.

The NTIA has the ability to change Alaska quickly for the better. I urge you to prioritize funding for solutions that prioritize tribal involvement and connect community's mot rapidly. For Alaska this means the use and adoption of next generation satellite systems and FCC 2.5ghz wireless.

Sincerely,



Chairman
907-359-2542
Drobinson59@msn.com

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Anchorage, AK 99501
aktribalspectrum.org
Ph: 907-206-7766
Fax: 907-308-6669



ONLY TRIBES CAN SOLVE THE RURAL ALASKA DIGITAL DIVIDE

There are two Alaskas. Most of us live in or near one of our major metropolitan areas. We experience good internet and cell phone service that can be depended on. If you live there, imagine a day or a week without access (affordable or not). Now, imagine many more years without it.

This is the reality for **over 200 rural and mostly tribal communities** who currently are not even connected to an electric grid or a road system, let alone have access to affordable broadband and related services – But it does not have to be this way. Tribes have the power to shape their own digital destiny.

There are billions being made available to bring broadband to rural tribal communities in America. Through grant funding, Alaska tribes can control long-term, affordable broadband service by joining together to build and own a statewide, satellite-based Alaska Tribal Network. However, the Federal Government’s “one size fits all” approach preferring fiber for broadband grant approvals does not serve this goal or consider the unique needs of rural Alaska. Current federal broadband language repeatedly prioritizes fiber infrastructure over other solutions. Given the unique off-grid and isolated nature of many Alaskan communities as well as other geographic and environmental challenges, this bias will unnecessarily leave tens of thousands of Alaskans without any broadband for generations to come.

We need to connect our remote villages as quickly as possible using satellites.

There is no argument that with an unlimited multibillion dollar budget, a fiber connection to every village can provide the most capacity, however a fiber solution is just not possible for these communities anytime soon. Why should these communities wait several more generations for the perfect terrestrial solution when they can install robust tribal village networks connected with satellite broadband now?

New satellite technology is the only thing that can close the digital divide in Alaska in the short-term. However, the word “satellite” does not appear in the government’s broadband final rule language. Recent applications for satellite-based solutions in Alaska have been turned down stating that the satellite technology is not capable of providing fast enough service. This is not correct.

If you were forced to use satellite service in the past, that was the stone age. Next-generation satellite broadband service is possible now in Alaska via OneWeb, and soon it will be augmented with massive affordable capacity from firms like Starlink, SES, and others. This satellite service is often indistinguishable from land-based solutions and represents life changing service for these communities.

Alaska tribes need to use government grant dollars to build and own standards-based networks in every village using recently awarded tribal 2.5 GHz wireless spectrum to distribute the satellite broadband across each village now. This will bridge the next decade to provide statewide relief with village wide cell phone and



broadband coverage at home or on the move including making 911 calls in an emergency. This also satisfies the FCC requirement to use the 2.5 GHZ tribal spectrum soon, so it is not forfeited.

These advanced last mile village networks also set the stage for future expansion. Should fiber become available and affordable at any point, it simply plugs into an already thriving local network, and a good solution becomes a great solution.

State and Federal Government grant evaluators need to understand that “preferring” satellite over fiber is the **only** way to address the unique challenges over the next decade while awaiting more traditional wired solutions for almost 200 remote rural Alaska communities. A satellite solution can also serve these populations at generally ten times lower cost than building fiber, which allows many more currently unserved Alaskans to be reached with available funds.

Tribes in Alaska can control their own “Broadband for All” digital future in a truly tribal effort. Alaskans need to raise their voice with their legislators and regional leaders to help grant evaluators understand that ***Alaska is different***. Satellite for remote Alaska is the **only** possible solution for broadband relief that won’t continue to leave many more generations unserved.

OPINION: Only tribes can bridge the rural Alaska digital divide

By Teresa Jacobsson

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Satellite internet modems from HughesNet, left, and ViaSat are some of the offerings from Microcom, a major player in Alaska's satellite internet market. July 19, 2017. (Loren Holmes / ADN)

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Teresa Jacobsson is founder and chair of the Alaska Tribal Administrators Association.

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