



# NATIONAL GRANGE OF THE ORDER OF PATRONS OF HUSBANDRY

1616 H ST. NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20006 | PHONE (202) 628-3507 | FAX (202) 347-1091

*American Values. Hometown Roots.*

April 14, 2016

The Honorable Greg Walden  
2186 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Anna Eshoo  
241 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Austin Scott  
2417 Rayburn HOB  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Walden, Congresswoman Eshoo and Congressman Scott:

On behalf of the National Grange and our members and rural Americans across the United States, I am writing today to share our concerns with H.R. 4884, the CURB Lifeline Abuse Act.

The National Grange has been a long-time supporter of the Lifeline program as well as of broadband expansion. We understand the concerns with the fiscal responsibility of the Lifeline program; in our review of the program, we feel that the FCC has taken the correct steps to keep the Lifeline program healthy, viable and efficient.

For your review, we have enclosed our most recent FCC filing on Lifeline issues. Also attached are personal stories about lack of access to Broadband members of the Grange have sent us, as well as Op-Ed in a recent morning consult. We feel these further illustrate the need of the Lifeline program.

Our key points of contention with the CURB bill include:

- 1 - The Phase Out: We oppose the two-year phase out of mobile voice as an eligible service. By phasing out wireless Lifeline and offering a broadband program they can't access, Lifeline reform will not help rural Americans. Access to broadband services should be more universal before wireless services via Lifeline are phased out.
- 2 - The Needs: Major portions of rural America have no access to broadband, 53% to be exact. Your proposed legislation could impede the Lifeline program from helping these individuals get access.
- 3 - The Fix: Third party verification will limit fraud by removing the opportunity for providers to enroll ineligible subscribers. The new verification procedure also increases transparency by making program data publicly available and understandable, including subscriber counts by provider and uniform disclosure of

annual subscriber recertification data.

4 - The Budget: Upon review and consultation with other experts and advocates, we believe that the FCC's \$2.25 billion budget established on March 31 is appropriate. This budget will allow for increased participation, which is expected given the expansion to broadband. It is estimated that 39 million families in the United States qualify for the Lifeline. The Grange does not support a hard budget cap outlined in the CURB bill.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue with you in more detail. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Betsy E. Huber". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "B" and "H".

Betsy Huber  
President