

January 28, 2025

Dear Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan, and Representative Begich,

We are writing to express our concern regarding the potential disruption of the Universal Service Fund (USF) following the recent ruling by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in Consumers' Research v. FCC. The Fifth Circuit held that the FCC—which oversees the collection of USF funds—is exercising governmental power without Congressional authorization. The FCC has since appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court, which has agreed to hear the case with an expected decision in mid-2025.

The USF is critical to ensuring equitable telecommunications and internet access in Alaska, especially in rural and underserved communities. It supports essential programs such as the Lifeline initiative for low-income households, the High Cost Fund to support critical fixed and mobile infrastructure in rural Alaska communities, E-Rate funding for schools and libraries, and the Rural Health Care Program's broadband support of rural hospitals and health clinics. A loss or delay in funding would jeopardize these services, impacting the education, health, and safety of thousands of Alaskans, widening the digital divide in Alaska, and hampering progress toward universal access to broadband services.

More specifically, an adverse decision by the U.S. Supreme Court could:

- Result in **Alaska losing approximately \$509 million** annually (as of FY23/24) in USF funds, jeopardizing connectivity for Alaska citizens, schools, and health care facilities. In part, **hospitals and health care facilities could lose \$221 million annually and schools could lose \$110 million** (as of FY23/24) in USF funds, creating massive budget implications for state and local governments.
- **Widen the connectivity gap** between Alaskans and the rest of the U.S.—placing Alaskans at a disadvantage solely due to where they live.

In short, schools and healthcare facilities would lose access to critical services and rural Alaskans could lose access to reliable phone and internet services.

Telecommunication services are vital for economic development, education, public safety, and healthcare access. Without action from Alaska's federal elected officials, the USF may cease to exist. We urge you to prioritize legislative action to protect this critical program before a court ruling creates uncertainty and potential service disruptions for Alaska's rural and tribal communities.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your leadership in preserving equitable access to telecommunications for all Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lisa Parady, Executive Director
Alaska Council of School Administration



Ben Mallott, President
Alaska Federation of Natives



Kati Capozzi, President & CEO
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Michael Lee, Superintendent
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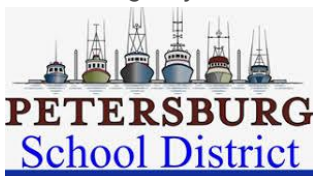
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Bill Burr, Superintendent
Wrangell Public School District



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Mission: to educate and inspire every student

Scott Ballard, Superintendent
Yupit School District



Ty Mase, Chief School Administrator
Chugach School District



Dr. Luke Meinhart, Superintendent
Fairbanks North Star Borough School District



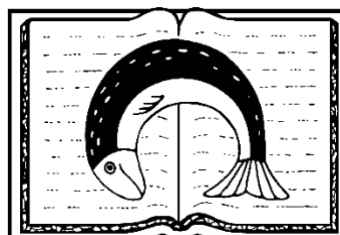
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