



TALKBACK

Letters to the editor

To the Editor:

I would like to respond to Mr. Chuck Deisbeck's Carroll Daily Times Herald editorial on July 24 entitled "New FCC rulings block rural access to affordable broadband". Mr. Deisbeck is absolutely correct that the recent FCC rulings hamper the development of broadband in rural areas, but he does perpetuate an incorrect myth about the Iowa Communications Network (ICN).

For years the media have painted the ICN as being

an obsolete and outdated network, which is 100-percent untrue and inaccurate. The "core" network of the ICN is the part in which the State of Iowa owns and maintains with no appropriated support from the Legislature. In fiscal year (FY) 2013, which just ended on June 30, the Legislature appropriated just under \$2.2 million to the ICN. Slightly more than \$1 million is designated to continue the upgrade of the State's Capitol Complex telephone system, and the remaining amount represents the required match that is necessary for the schools to receive the federal government's e-rate discount for services purchased from the ICN. Neither of these designated funds are for the operation or maintenance of the network.

This core network has

bandwidth and speeds equal to or, in most cases, greater than any other network in Iowa. It is designed to have excess so that we may meet the growing demands of education and government as they function in today's electronic world.

The ICN does have difficulty in providing the bandwidth demands for all of education, but the reason is simple ... by law the ICN cannot provide the direct connectivity to the schools and must lease these services from telecommunications providers throughout the state. Many of these connections remain just as they were 20 years ago when the network was constructed.

Before it sounds like I am putting all of the blame on the rural telephone companies, there is reason they have not invested in the con-

nection from the ICN to the schools. The real revenue is in providing the services across the circuits in which the schools are connected.

Throughout the history of the ICN the services like Internet, video and data communications have not been available to the local provider. That is why I support Mr. Deisbeck and ask for support in changing the FCC rules.

I would like to see the rural telephone companies receive assistance in building out the connections from the ICN to the schools while we work with the industry to find ways for them to provide services across the facilities in which they make investments.

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