

Dear Senators Sinema and Kelly,

We write to convey the rapidly growing urgency to confirm Jessica Rosenworcel as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) permanent chair and Gigi Sohn as a fifth commissioner. The FCC will have a 2-1 Republican majority if the Senate does not confirm Rosenworcel and Sohn by the end of the year. The Senate must act quickly.

Arizona needs a fully functional FCC to help close the digital divide, particularly acute in our state. In eight of Arizona's fifteen counties, more than two-thirds of households lack access to high-speed broadband.¹ Low-income families, Native Americans, and people of color are disproportionately disconnected, compounding grave inequalities that were made worse during the pandemic.

Broadband access is a significant problem for families living on reservations in Arizona. Tribes are some of the least connected communities in the United States, and eighteen percent of tribal reservation residents have no internet access at home.² The 22 federally recognized Tribes in Arizona face unique connectivity challenges at a time when broadband access has proven essential for distance learning, telehealth appointments, meetings over video platforms, connecting to remote work, and much more.

Given the legislative calendar and the diminishing number of days for hearings and confirmation votes, we have reached a critical point to guarantee the agency charged with ensuring affordable communications access can do its work. Failing to confirm a permanent chair and a fifth commissioner leaves the FCC less than fully operational and limits its capacity to most effectively:

- Finish long-overdue reforms to the FCC's outdated and inaccurate broadband maps, which are used to direct federal infrastructure investments;
- Strengthen the Lifeline program, which helps low-income households afford telephone and internet service;
- Create rules to make our nation's communications networks more reliable and resilient to natural disasters and other threats;
- Guide the deployment of new broadband infrastructure built with federal dollars to make it as effective as possible;
- Protect consumers and workers from anticompetitive, job-killing mergers in the telecommunications sector;
- Approve emergency waivers for E-rate funded infrastructure to be opened up for remote education; and
- Meet the challenge of the 2018 Broadcast Ownership Quadrennial Review and halt the dangerous trend towards consolidated ownership in broadcasting by reasserting principles of localism, competition and ownership diversity.

¹ <https://www.azcentral.com/story/money/business/tech/2021/07/07/broadband-access-arizona/47204697/>

² https://aipi.asu.edu/sites/default/files/tribal_digital_divide_stimulus_bill_advocacy.pdf

The FCC has the singular ability to ensure affordable and reliable communications for all. The pandemic showed us the unshakable image of children doing their classwork from fast-food parking lots using borrowed WiFi. We cannot let those students or any family wait any longer. If we are to reach the goal of having a country where everyone, no matter their address or size of their bank account, has affordable access to high-speed internet, we need a full commission immediately. We urge Congress not to lose any more time and to confirm Jessica Rosenworcel and Gigi Sohn by the end of the year.

Sincerely,

Cat's in the Cradle New Life Sanctuary
Common Sense
Gila River Telecommunications, Inc.
LISC Phoenix
Native Public Media
Open Technology Institute
Red Rock Mountain Studios LLC
Rural Arizona Action
Swinging Sixties Productions
Terabyte Media LLC