

Congressional and FCC Quotes Supporting the E-Rate
Used for the Instructions for the 10th Anniversary Celebratory Event 2/27/07

Thank you for attending our event tonight to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the E-Rate program. Yes, it's been over 10 years since the concept now known as the E-Rate was conceived, included in amendments in both the House and the Senate, was passed by both bodies as part of the reauthorization of the Telecommunications Act, and signed into law. Regulations were written and our schools and libraries started to apply 10 years ago this winter. Tonight we honor the founding mother and fathers of this amendment and salute them in their wisdom. Without Senators Rockefeller, Snowe, Exon or Kerrey, and Representative Markey, our public and private schools and libraries would not have this essential resource. Tonight we honor them.

We all know and work with the Members of Congress we are here to salute tonight, so instead of the usual biographical information by way of introduction, we are going to offer their own words, given on the Floor, as they rose over 10 years ago to offer their support of this program.

Senator Rockefeller spoke these words on the floor of the Senate:

“There is a section in this (reauthorization) bill that modernizes the concept of universal telephone service and promises affordable rates to a very special category of American institutions, elementary and secondary schools, and libraries. I would argue this section of the bill is exactly the kind of effort we should be taking to strengthen the human fabric and values of America.

We deliberately targeted the institutions in our towns and communities that promote community, where children and adults learn together, gather together, and work together. In West Virginia, our classrooms and our libraries are often the only way that our children and citizens can tap into the wonders of computers and the links to a vast world of information and knowledge now available through something we call telecommunications.

This part of the bill also rewards learning, education, and the art of healing. We want schools to be a place where children delve into computers. We want libraries to be vibrant centers of learning for families. We want rural clinics to band together and use telecommunications to transfer the best of health care into the most distant places. “

With such an eloquent start to this amendment how could we not succeed? Please welcome Senator Rockefeller and recognize his role in this program.

Senator Olympia Snowe was equally as elegant in her support of this amendment. She offered these words on the floor.

“Mr. President, I rise in support as a cosponsor of this amendment to clarify how universal service discounts to schools, libraries, and rural hospitals should be targeted. Specifically, the language in this bill guarantees schools and libraries in Maine and throughout the nation an affordable rate.

This amendment meets two goals. First, it guarantees affordable access to telemedicine and educational telecommunications services. Second, this amendment ensures that the universal service fund is used wisely and efficiently by targeting the discounts.

Technology allows the transmission of information across traditional boundaries of time and space, dramatically changing the way that American school children learn, and the way that health care is

provided. The Snowe-Rockefeller-Exon-Kerrey provision in the bill ensures that competition ultimately achieves this goal for all Americans, regardless of where they live.”

Please welcome Senator Snowe and recognize her role in this program.

Not only did we have incredible support for the E-Rate program in the Senate, but we had a star supporter in the House of Representatives. Representative Edward Markey led the way across the Hill and tonight we want to acknowledge his support as well. He offered these words on the floor:

“Passage of this amendment will ensure learning links are built into each classroom, K through 12, through preferential rates which are absolutely. We have to make sure that every child is given the skills needed to compete for high-skilled jobs that otherwise may go to other places in the world.

As many of you may know, establishing learning links to K-12 schools has long been a concern of mine and this provision will make such links affordable for every school in Massachusetts and the country. I believe it is imperative that we link all the classrooms in the country because it is the only way that we can mitigate against a growing digital divide where some schools get access and others do not. We must bring all our kids along to the future. No nation can hope to prosper in a fiercely competitive global economy where information is the coin of the realm if it does not give the bottom 10, 15, or 20 percent of its society the Information Age tools necessary to compete for jobs in such an economy.

Please welcome Representative Markey and recognize his role in this program.

Before we recognize our final two senators tonight, we want to acknowledge the significant role of the Federal Communications Commission in this program. We are honored to have with us tonight Chairman Martin, and Commissioners Copps, Adelstein and Tate.

Chairman Kevin Martin

Sworn in to the Commission in July 2001

Appointed Chairman in March 2005

June 2005: “I fully support the universal service program and the critical function it serves to ensure access for consumers in rural and high-cost areas, and to promote access to advanced services for schools, libraries, and health care service providers in rural areas.”

Commissioner Michael Copps

Sworn in May 2001

2004: "Without the E-Rate, think about how many young people from the poorest and most geographically isolated communities in this country would have been left totally on the wrong side of the digital divide."

Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein

Began his term in December 2002

October 2004: "As a parent, I find the achievements of the E-Rate program and the educational community to be inspirational. With the right tools, creative educators can enlighten our children, feed

their curiosity, and teach the fundamental skills needed to continually better our society. I can only imagine what communications technology will enable my children to do when they are in school."

Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate

Began her term in January 2006

October 2006: "Giving our students the tools and skills to compete in the increasingly competitive global economy is essential if our country is to remain a leader. I continue to hear wonderful success stories about how connections improve our educational system, often for students in the most isolated areas."

May 2006:" Broadband in schools brings new technology and new resources to rural and low-income students."

Because of scheduling conflicts, former Senator Kerrey of Nebraska could not be with us this evening, but he did offer these words of support for the E-Rate program.

"This bill has hundreds of pages in it. Every single word is important. Every single phrase here is going to affect something. We all know it and I support this provision. First, we were successful in keeping language in the bill that gives preferential rates to schools, libraries, and to health care facilities. It is very important, particularly in the area of K-12 education, that we provide those preferential rates. The capacity of our students to do well and prepare themselves either for the work force or college will be significantly diminished (if we don't support this provision.)."

Tonight, on behalf of Senator Kerrey, his former staff member Carol Ann Bischoff will accept his award.

The fourth Senator involved from the beginning of the E-Rate program was Senator Exon, also of Nebraska. He, unfortunately, is no longer with us, but he lives on in his words and deeds. He passionately stated this on the floor of the Senate:

"Mr. President, I am pleased to voice my enthusiastic support for this most significant piece of telecommunications legislation since the enactment of the Communications Act of 1934. As a Conference Committee member and author and backer of key provisions of the bill I believe that this legislation is good for American families, children and citizens in rural America. The Snowe-Rockefeller-Exon-Kerrey amendment creates a unique partnership with private industry. It will ensure discount telecommunications rates for schools, libraries and rural health care facilities. This landmark provision will give children in Harvard, Massachusetts, and Cambridge, Nebraska, opportunities to use telecommunications technologies to learn from libraries and scholars at both Harvard and Cambridge Universities."

To accept the award on behalf of the Senator Exon is his former staff member Chris McLean.