



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact: Kelly Worthington (406) 443-6377, [kelly@w-t-a.org](mailto:kelly@w-t-a.org)**

## **WTA Encouraged by Draft USF Reform Legislation**

**Helena, MT (November 6, 2009)** – The Western Telecommunications Alliance (WTA) today praised Congressmen Rick Boucher (D-VA) and Lee Terry (R-NE) for releasing a discussion draft of legislation to reform the Universal Service Fund (USF). Reforming USF is critical to ensuring that Americans living in rural areas have access to advanced communications services.

“Congressman Boucher and Terry recognize that the future is broadband and USF needs to be modernized as technology changes,” said WTA’s Executive Vice President Kelly Worthington. “WTA supports them in this effort and will work with them and their allies in Congress to preserve and reform the Universal Service Fund.”

WTA is particularly pleased with the provision in the draft bill to expand USF to explicitly cover broadband as well as the provision to expand the base of contributors so the burden of supporting the fund is spread out over a larger group of network users. The draft bill requires all providers of voice service that use phone numbers or IP addresses and any provider that offers a connection to the Internet to contribute to the fund, which would help address the problem of the increasing contribution factor. In addition, WTA is encouraged that the bill calls for the FCC to address the problem of access charge avoidance commonly known as phantom traffic.

“Without USF, rural Americans will not have access to advanced voice, data and video services at a level that is comparable to those living in suburban or urban neighborhoods,” said Worthington. “Congress must act to ensure we have a stable and sustainable fund for the future.”

###

*Western Telecommunications Alliance represents over 250 rural telecommunications companies providing quality voice, data and video services in rural areas in the 24 states west of the Mississippi River. On average, WTA member companies serve fewer than 3,000 access lines with fewer than 500 customers in each exchange. WTA's members serve some of the most rural and hard-to-serve communities in the country and are on the forefront of bringing 21st Century telecommunications services to rural America. For more information about WTA visit [www.w-t-a.org](http://www.w-t-a.org).*