



Washington

wants to know



Keeping Connected Across The Country

(NAPSA)—More than 70 years ago, Congress made providing telephone service for all Americans a priority, securing comparable service at comparable prices for consumers throughout the nation. Lawmakers established the principles of universal service to ensure all consumers access to affordable telecommunications services no matter where they live.

Today, Americans enjoy a multitude of benefits from their connection to our advanced telecommunications network. It gives everyone the ability to call anyone, anywhere. It brings the expertise of health care specialists to towns without hospitals, and gives school children access to a world of knowledge via the Internet. It even creates jobs and economic development opportunities, which contribute to the health and well-being of communities throughout the nation.

Support for our telecommunications network via the Universal Service Fund makes all of these things possible. USF is a cost-recovery mechanism that enables rural telephone companies to build and maintain network infrastructure in high cost areas that would otherwise be cost prohibitive. All consumers contribute to the USF via a minimal charge on their monthly phone bill. And, all consumers benefit from the advanced communications services made possible by that network, which enable you to stay connected to friends and loved ones or to con-



The Universal Service Fund helps ensure access to phone and Internet services.

duct business online.

Now, these benefits could soon be lost to Americans everywhere. Congress is preparing to update our communications laws. Part of that debate is focused on whether the USF is still necessary. However, without sustainable USF support, network investment will deteriorate. The true costs of telecommunications services in rural communities could ultimately prove unaffordable to many consumers, small businesses, health care facilities, schools and libraries.

Our nation as a whole has benefited from Congress's strong commitment to the goal of universal service. As a consumer, you benefit from continued support for the fund. Contact your members of Congress and urge them to make a commitment to keep the Universal Service Fund sustainable for all Americans.