

Colorado congressmen scrutinize EAGLE-Net's broadband service

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Colorado Congressmen Cory Gardner, Scott Tipton, Mike Coffman and Doug Lamborn are asking for clarification on the goals and activities of the EAGLE-Net Alliance, a government entity intended to “bring high-speed Internet to every public school in Colorado through public-private partnerships.”

In a strongly worded letter to Lawrence E. Strickling, the Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information at the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the four members ask why EAGLE-Net is overbuilding existing networks at the expense of longstanding rural telecom providers and why truly underserved communities are being ignored.

“EAGLE-Net's effort to overbuild existing networks is very troubling and terribly wasteful,” Gardner said. “Taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize a program that is putting Colorado's rural telecom industry out of business. There is a genuine need for broadband access in our rural communities, and if EAGLE-Net is not meeting that need then its mission should be reassessed.”

“In addition to being a vital tool for students to learn in the digital age, broadband access is essential for small businesses to reach new audiences and find new opportunities for economic growth and job creation in the global marketplace. This is especially true in our rural communities where small business opportunities are often limited by geography,” Tipton said. “We must ensure that the grant awarded to EAGLE-Net is being used to expand broadband access to rural areas in Colorado that are currently underserved, and not to give EAGLE-Net an unfair competitive advantage in regions where existing providers are already meeting that need.”

“The original goal of the EAGLE-Net Alliance to provide rural broadband service to underserved areas is laudable, and one which I supported,” Coffman said. “I am now concerned that they are overbuilding into areas which already have existing lines and providers who also receive federal loans through the Rural Utility Service. We must avoid duplicative government programs and ineffective use of taxpayer dollars.”

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Holyoke Enterprise September 27, 2012