



2012 Legislative Agriculture Chairs Summit

Resolution on the Universal Service Fund

- Whereas,** the State Ag and Rural Leaders, (SARL) is comprised of agriculture and rural leaders of state and provincial legislative bodies from the US and Canada; and
- Whereas,** the Universal Service Fund (USF) was created by the United States Federal Communication Commission to meet Congressional universal service goals as mandated by the Telecommunications Act of 1996; and
- Whereas,** the 1996 Act states that all providers of telecommunications services should contribute to federal universal service in some equitable and nondiscriminatory manner; there should be specific, predictable, and sufficient Federal and State mechanisms to preserve and advance universal service; and that all schools, classrooms, health care providers, and libraries should have access to advanced telecommunications services; and
- Whereas,** on October 27, 2011, the FCC approved a six-year transfer process that would transition money from the Universal Service Fund to a new \$4.5 billion/year Connect America Fund (CAF) for broadband internet expansion, effectively putting an end to the USF; and
- Whereas,** SARL supports the goal of CAF to connect all Americans to high-speed internet, there are concerns that the FCC seeks to connect areas with the highest density of people first, which will leave rural areas wanting for both broadband access and affordable conventional telephone service; now therefore be it
- Resolved,** that SARL and the states work to ensure an equitable distribution of resources to rural communities to address affordability and adequate speeds for under-served, non-competitive markets including an option for states to receive funds directly for prioritization and redistribution; and be it further resolved that
- Resolved,** that this resolution be submitted to the White House and the chair of the Federal Communications Commission.

*Approved by members of State Agriculture and Rural Leaders
Legislative Agriculture Chairs Summit
January 8, 2012 - Arlington, Virginia*