

### **EXHIBIT 3**

#### **DEMONSTRATION OF RISK OF RATE INSTABILITY OR SERVICE INTERRUPTION OR CESSATION**

The operating environment in which the Company finds itself has created a climate of great financial uncertainty. The Company has been working over the past several years to address growing competition. The Company has taken steps to increase the availability and attributes of advanced services offered by the Company, including broadband. This has resulted in the Company making additional investments in regulated plant of approximately \$17.1 million during the period January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2016. As a result, the Company has a substantial debt obligation to cover the investment that has been made.

The overall financial condition of the Company is detailed on other Exhibits to this Petition. Additionally, due to the investment the company has made in upgrading the network to 100% fiber, since 2011 the Company increased total RUS debt by \$22.2 million and has repaid \$7.8 million in principal and interest. The Company has looked for ways to lower expenses. However, much of the Company's operating expenses are fixed obligations, such as debt-related payments.

At the same time, the Company is seeing increased competition. For example, the Company has seen some migration of customers "cutting the cord" to move to wireless or other service as their sole method of telecommunications. Since 2011, the Company has lost 69 access lines. A loss of customers equates to a loss of revenue without a corresponding reduction in expenses or corresponding increase in rates. This trend of access line loss is exacerbated by the Federal Communications Commission's requirement that the Company increase its rates to remain eligible for full federal USF support. Since 2012, the Company has increased its local exchange service rates in order to be in compliance with the national urban rate floor prescribed by the Federal Communications Commission. However, those increases have been insufficient to fully replace the revenues that have been lost due to the reduction in access lines. In addition, those rate increases have tended to stimulate a surge in disconnection of service by customers.

As an example of why state Program support is needed, the Company's receipt of revenue from the traditional Washington intrastate universal service access rate element and related pooling fund were terminated effective July 1, 2014. Since then, the loss of revenues derived from the traditional universal service access rate element has been off-set by revenues received by the Company as a result of its participation in the Program. Using 2012 as a base line, the Company is facing a loss of traditional universal service fund revenues of approximately \$115,181.00 per year if its participation in the Program is not renewed. Since 2011 the Company has seen a decrease of federal high cost support in excess of \$200,900.00.

As another example, some of the financial uncertainty that the Company faces stems from the USF/ICC Transformation Order issued by the Federal Communications Commission.<sup>1</sup> The USF/ICC Transformation Order has built in an automatic decline in the Company's intrastate and interstate access revenues. The intercarrier compensation portion of the Transformation Order introduces a concept of a base line year for calculating terminating access and reciprocal compensation revenues and provides support from the Connect America Fund ("CAF") based on the base line year. However, the base line year revenues (from which the level of CAF support is derived) are reduced iteratively by five percent each year. "The CAF support reduction began in July 2012. Projecting through the year ending June 30, 2018, including reductions that will occur July 1, 2017, the Company has seen a reduction in support from the base line revenue of approximately \$234,686

These factors, among others, have led to the strained financial condition of the Company as reflected in the financial reports that are part of the Petition.

The combination of factors noted above creates a situation in which, without support from the state universal communications services program, the Company may be faced with a choice of increasing rates further or reducing service in order to be able to match expenses to revenues. Neither choice presents a viable path for providing continued high quality service to customers. The dilemma presented by these choices reflects the risk of rate instability or service interruption or cessation to which the Company is subject.

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<sup>1</sup> *In the Matter of Connect America Fund, A National Broadband Plan for Our Future, Establishing Just and Reasonable Rates for Local Exchange Carriers, High-Cost Universal Service Support, Developing an Unified Intercarrier Compensation Regime, Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, Lifeline and Link-Up, Universal Service Reform - Mobility Fun*, WC Docket No. 10-90, GN Docket No. 09-51, WC Docket No. 07-135, WC Docket No. 05-337, CC Docket No. 01-92, CC Docket No. 96-45, WC Docket No. 03-109, WT Docket No. 10-208, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, FCC 11-161 (rel. Nov. 18, 2011)(*USF/ICC Transformation Order*).