

**Exh. SB-4  
Docket UT-240029  
Witness: Sean Bennett**

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON  
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

**In the Matter of the Petition of the**

**DOCKET UT-240029**

**QWEST CORPORATION;  
CENTURYTEL OF WASHINGTON;  
CENTURYTEL OF INTERISLAND;  
CENTURYTEL OF COWICHE; AND  
UNITED TELEPHONE COMPANY OF  
THE NORTHWEST**

**to be Competitively Classified Pursuant  
to RCW 80.36.320**

**EXHIBIT TO TESTIMONY OF**

**SEAN BENNETT**

**STAFF OF  
WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND  
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

*Public FCC News Release on 3-20-2024*

**April 3, 2024**



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**For Immediate Release**

## **CHAIRWOMAN ROSENWORCEL CALLS ON AGENCY TO MOVE AHEAD WITH RURAL WIRELESS BROADBAND PLAN**

***With FCC's New Map to Target Underserved Communities, the Proposed New Rules  
Would Relaunch the 5G Fund***

WASHINGTON, March 20, 2024—FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel today called on the agency to move ahead with plans to make targeted investments in the deployment of wireless broadband services in rural communities. The proposed rules shared with her fellow Commissioners would, if adopted by a vote of the full Commission, relaunch the 5G Fund for Rural America. The FCC's new and improved broadband coverage map, which the 5G Fund will use, shows that over 14 million homes and businesses lack mobile 5G coverage.

“For the first time in our history of supporting wireless networks through the universal service system, this agency has comprehensive data about where service is and is not all across the country,” **said Chairwoman Rosenworcel**. “This will be the foundation of our plan to expand the 5G service in rural America to where it is needed most—where people live, work and travel.”

The 5G Fund Phase I multi-round reverse auction would distribute up to \$9 billion to bring voice and 5G mobile broadband service to rural areas of the country unlikely to otherwise see unsubsidized deployment of 5G-capable networks. Additionally, to promote the deployment of Open Radio Access Network technology (Open RAN) and its benefits for competition, national security, and supply chain reliability, the 5G Fund would include up to \$900 million in incentives for incorporating Open RAN in 5G Fund-supported networks.

The auctions will be based on the mobile coverage data obtained in the Broadband Data Collection and reflected on the FCC's National Broadband Map. To ensure that the Phase I auction reflects the most accurate data possible regarding areas in need of 5G service, parties are encouraged to promptly file challenges through the Broadband Data Collection mechanism where appropriate.

The Second Report and Order circulated today would take a number of steps to improve the program, including: modifying the definition of areas eligible for the auction and ensuring that areas in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands that meet the criteria would be included in the 5G Fund auction; increasing the budget for Phase I of the 5G Fund auction and the Tribal reserve budget—a set-aside portion of the fund to support connecting Tribal communities; and requiring 5G Fund support recipients to implement cybersecurity and supply chain risk management plans as a condition of receiving support.

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*This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).*