



National Congress of American Indians

# NCAI News

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## **FCC Waives Regulations To Provide Rural and Native Alaskans With Internet Access**

The Federal Communications Commission last month waived its universal service rules so that rural and Native Alaskans will have the opportunity to gain Internet access through schools and libraries.

The universal service program for schools and libraries (e-rate program) provides Internet discounts to eligible entities if they certify that the services will be used solely for educational purposes. In Alaska, a number of schools and libraries that obtain Internet access through the e-rate program rely on satellite services that are provided 24-hour, 7-days-a-week on a non-usage basis. Schools and libraries occupy these connections for educational purposes during their operating hours, but the available connections go unused when they are closed.

The FCC waiver granted to Alaska will allow these unused telecommunications services to be used for non-educational purposes under the following conditions:

- No toll-free or local dial-up Internet access is otherwise available in the community
- Services are sold by the provider on the basis of a price that is not usage sensitive (no additional cost)
- The school or library has not requested more services that are necessary for educational purposes
- Use by community members is limited to hours in which the school or library through which the Internet would be access is closed
- Excess services are made available to all capable service providers in a neutral manner that does not require or take into account any commitments or promises from the service providers

According to state statistics, there are approximately 135 communities with non-usage sensitive connections that will benefit from the ruling.

The FCC ruling is available at [http://www.indiantech.org/main/pages/legis\\_reg/index.asp](http://www.indiantech.org/main/pages/legis_reg/index.asp).

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