

Resolution 14: Securing the Future of Universal Connectivity

Sponsored by Michele Days

Securing the Future of Universal Connectivity Resolution

WHEREAS, every American, regardless of income, age, education level, or zip code, deserves access to reliable and affordable communication services; and

WHEREAS, in today's society, this includes not only telephone service but high-speed broadband that connects individuals to school, work, economic opportunity, and healthcare; and

WHEREAS, the Universal Service Fund (USF), a longstanding federal program, is critical to ensuring connectivity in rural and underserved areas by supporting communications infrastructure for healthcare providers, low-income families, schools, libraries, and Tribal communities; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) estimates that approximately 24 million Americans still lack reliable broadband access; and

WHEREAS, nearly 36% of rural residents and more than 20% of those living on Tribal lands do not have access to fixed broadband services; and

WHEREAS, lower income communities continue to face limited connectivity, with only 84% of adults earning under \$30,000 per year having home internet, compared to 97% of those earning over \$100,000; and

WHEREAS, access to broadband is also shaped by educational attainment and age, with adults holding only a high school diploma and those aged 65 and older less likely to have internet access or own smartphones; and

WHEREAS, the current USF funding structure supports approximately \$8.8 billion in essential services annually, but is inadequate to meet growing needs; and

WHEREAS, the recent Supreme Court decision affirming the constitutionality of the USF ensuring that the program can continue underscored the need for reform; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Organization of Black Elected Legislative Women (NOBEL Women) commends the Supreme Court for upholding the Universal Service Fund and urges Congress and the Federal Communications Commission to act swiftly to modernize its structure; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States, the Vice President, the Supreme Court of the United States, members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, the Federal Communications Commission, and other relevant federal and state officials and agencies to emphasize the urgent need for equitable and future-proof broadband policy.