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**From:** Kate Klise <kateklise@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 26, 2015 6:27 PM  
**To:** BOCrfc2015  
**Subject:** Attention: Broadband Opportunity Council

Dear Sir or Madam:

My name is Kate Klise. I'm a former *People* magazine reporter turned bestselling children's book author. For the past 25 years, I've written most of my books in the Missouri Ozarks, just like Laura Ingalls Wilder, who lived and wrote her beloved Little House series just fifteen minutes from my property. Unlike Wilder, I have the advantage of high-speed Internet, provided by my phone company, CenturyLink. But for years I didn't have broadband access, which is why I'm writing today to urge you to help bridge the digital divide.

A little background: When I bought my 40 acres in 1990 (for the laughable price of \$25k; it was my refunded grad school tuition), I was surprised—and even charmed—to find out I was on a telephone party line. I'd never *heard* of such a thing—except on “Green Acres.” My bemusement quickly turned to wild-eyed frustration when I tried to conduct phone interviews for *People* and couldn't because someone on the party line was using the phone – or worse yet, *holding the line open* by keeping the phone off the hook, just in case they wanted to use the phone later. I finally got my own private line in the '90s, only because I offered to pay the phone company whatever it took. Later that same decade, I became an AOL dial-up customer when the first CDs became available. But that experience, too, quickly grew frustrating. Not only was I unable to download the page proof layouts because of the large file size, I couldn't communicate effectively with my book editors in New York or my illustrator in California.

After many calls and letters to my phone company, local representatives, and even the Missouri Public Service Commission, I finally got a high-speed connection a few years ago. (Confession: I accidentally broke down in tears one day while talking to the local phone guy. I think he finally took mercy—or maybe pity—on me.) In any case, my editors were thrilled with my new and improved Internet connection. My illustrator was ecstatic. I was happy, too, of course, because I could finally do what I wanted to do—*write*—without having to stress about technology. But I had survivor's guilt. I felt lousy for the many people in rural Missouri who lacked what I had. I couldn't—and *can't*—stop thinking how much more productive and prosperous the Missouri Ozarks, and all of rural America, could be if more homes and businesses had affordable broadband access.

Here's one example: The woman who cleans and cares for my house when I'm on book tour has a daughter, Kelsey, now age 19, who desperately wanted to go to college. She knew it would be a struggle, both financially and emotionally. Neither of her parents have college degrees. Her dad is a car mechanic. Her mom works in a school cafeteria. But Kelsey was single-minded in her determination. I was more than happy to write her a glowing letter of a recommendation. But when I asked how the application process was coming along, Kelsey told me she couldn't access the Common Application, used by most colleges, on her home computer because they're on dial-up. Of course, I invited her over to my house, where we spent the next two weekends knocking out the applications. And now? She's just completed her first year at Drury University in Springfield, Missouri. The school gave Kelsey a \$9,000/year renewable scholarship. The Community Foundation of the Ozarks gave her an additional \$5,000/year renewable scholarship. Her electric cooperative also gave her \$1,000/year scholarship. All because she was able to complete the application process—for both admission and for scholarships—using high-speed internet.

Missouri Senator Claire McCaskill, who I love and voted for, was a vocal proponent of relaxing the FAA rules regarding the use of digital devices during takeoff and landing on commercial flights. Okay, sure. I get this. But does my own fabulous senator not realize how *tone-deaf* she appears to many of her own constituents who only *wish* their biggest

technological problem was whether or not they could use a Kindle while taking off on a flight? And if Sen. McCaskill doesn't grasp this, I wonder if anyone in DC does.

I urge you to give this matter serious consideration. If there's anything I can do to help the cause, please let me know. The days of Laura Ingalls Wilder and party lines are over. Modern technology might not be as charming as Pa's fiddle, but it's *desperately* needed if people in small-town America are ever going to be able to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Best regards and thanks for reading this far.

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