

**PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120**

**Proposed Rulemaking to Amend
PA Universal Service Fund Regulations**

**PUBLIC MEETING OF AUGUST 24, 2023
3040646-LAW
DOCKET NO. L-2023-3040646 and
P-2010-2217748**

STATEMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN STEPHEN M. DeFRANK

Today, the Commission takes long overdue action to issue an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANOPR) to review and amend our regulations governing the Pennsylvania Universal Service Fund (PA USF). The PA USF is a vital tool to ensure that those Pennsylvanians who want access to safe and reliable basic local exchange service at just and reasonable rates have such access.


As an initial matter, I would like to commend the Commission staff who drafted this rulemaking. It is a clear and concise summary of a decades-long history of a complicated and often controversial matter and asks the difficult but important questions.

I recognize that the matter we are voting on today raises some tough issues to which there are no easy answers. As noted in the ANOPR, there is a clear convergence of less total end-user intrastate revenues, fewer access lines, and a diminishing contribution base that undergirds potential PA USF reform. At the same time, we must examine what is “basic universal service” in today’s world.

Nonetheless, our job is to raise those difficult issues and seek reasonable answers to them. Anywhere in the state, a Pennsylvanian should be able to pick up a landline telephone and connect to the public switched telephone network to call a neighbor across the street, a loved one across the country, or access emergency services when there is a fire or they need medical attention – all at a high quality and at an affordable rate. This has always been the challenge of Chapter 30... to “maintain universal service at affordable rates while encouraging the accelerated provision of advanced services and deployment of a universally available, state-of-the-art, interactive broadband telecommunications network in rural, suburban and urban areas.”¹

As a result, I am glad to see that we are moving forward on this matter and vote in favor of issuing the ANOPR. Again, I thank staff for their fine work which enable us to take this step today.

August 24, 2023
Date



Stephen M. DeFrank
Vice Chairman

¹ 66 Pa.C.S. § 3011(2).