Dear Members of the Arlington County Board,

I spent 14 years living in apartments in Arlington. For that entire time, Comcast was my only choice for internet service. I paid around $100 a month for service from Comcast that was, frankly, bad. It was slower than advertised, cut out intermittently, and customer service was terrible. And I had no recourse because the alternative was not having internet access. Even without COVID, broadband internet access is something required to be a full participant in modern society.

That experience made me keen to attend the panel session put on by Arlington Fiber and Arlington Democrats a few months ago. Now, I knew Comcast had been ripping me off all those years, but my jaw dropped when I heard just how badly. Both localities that participated in the panel and had implemented community broadband went from an average price of around $100 per month with a year contract, to $25 a month with no contract. I did the math, and I would have saved $12,600 over those 14 years.

Given that other localities in Virginia have implemented community broadband, I see no reason why Arlington's goal shouldn't be to provide cheap internet access to all its residents. I am disappointed to see that this feasibility study has so small a scope. Everyone in Arlington, regardless of income level, deserves to be freed from the effective monopoly that companies like Comcast have been using to rip us off.

The postal service was created in 1775 to provide a way for all Americans to reliably stay connected to the world around them. It was the broadband internet of its day. The postal service still routinely tops the list of most popular government agencies.

An Arlington broadband authority, which could allow residents to save hundreds of dollars a year and jettison a universally disliked company like Comcast from their life, would almost certainly be equally beloved. Let's follow the lead of The Eastern Shore and other localities in Virginia and make it happen in here.

Dan Shuhler
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