

# SAN MIGUEL COUNTY

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

VERN EBERT

ELAINE FISCHER

ART GOODTIMES

May 31, 2006

Honorable Governor Bill Owens  
136 State Capitol  
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Governor Owens:

It has come to our attention that the MNT Network, a statewide initiative, has fallen short of its mark of bringing fiber optics to every county seat in the state. We recently became aware that the project has stalled approximately 16 miles south of the town of Silverton, the county seat of San Juan County.

Apparently Qwest has stalled the completion of the project by adding bandwidth capability to an existing microwave radio relay originally from the 1970's as a temporary measure in 2003. We have been informed that Qwest is attempting to make the microwave relay a permanent solution rather than completing the job that the contract specified. San Juan County and Silverton have formed a coalition in an attempt to have the final 16 miles of digital cable completed, which they refer to as "the digital divide".

Silverton is a remote community and having 21<sup>st</sup> century communication capability is essential to their economic development. Radio tower communications have proven unreliable, as the county seat was without communication for one day last winter. An avalanche disabled one of the relay stations serving their community. A fiber optic digital cable would not have experienced such a disruption.

We would appreciate your support to bridge the last 16 miles of fiber optic line on behalf of San Juan County and their county seat of Silverton.

Sincerely,

*Elaine R.C. Fischer*

Elaine R.C. Fischer  
Chair