

**Statement of
Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission
All-Hands Meeting on Broadband Workshops
August 5, 2009**

Thank you all for coming. The National Broadband Plan will be the one of the most important initiatives that this agency has ever undertaken.

As you know, the President and Congress have entrusted the FCC with the responsibility of developing a National Broadband Plan, due in February.

Broadband is the great infrastructure challenge of our generation. It is to us what railroads, electricity, highways and telephones were to previous generations.

We are at a crossroads. For our country's success in the 21st century, we need ubiquitous broadband that is a platform for commerce, for democratic engagement, and for helping address major national challenges.

Let me put broadband's importance into some concrete terms.

Broadband is a pathway to educational opportunity. High school graduates with an Internet connection at home are roughly twice as likely to go to college as those who don't.

Broadband will improve the quality of U.S. health care and allow billions in savings by facilitating the sharing of electronic medical records and making remote diagnostics and monitoring possible.

And open and competitive broadband networks will promote innovation and be an enduring engine for economic growth

As you all know, too many Americans are still bypassed by broadband's benefits. Roughly 40 percent of US households don't have broadband. That number is closer to 60 percent for some groups – such as people earning less than \$50,000 per year, for minorities, and for rural Americans.

The reason I called today's meeting is that our work on this project is about to kick into high gear. Tomorrow, we will hold the first of over 20 public workshops on a series of important issues around broadband. From this point forward, there really is no letting up.

I want to thank all of you in advance for being a part of this historic undertaking. I understand the pressure of the looming deadline, and that many will sacrifice to ensure the Commission meets the moment. I want to thank the team that will lead this effort.

I won't single everyone out, but this is an extraordinary team. This is a team that will be smart about economics and business, smart about technology, smart about the law, smart about history and other disciplines. And smart about the lives of everyday consumers and how broadband will affect the lives of all Americans.

I want to thank those team members who are new to the Commission, who have jumped into public service to be part of this effort. And I want to thank those people who were already at the Commission who have stepped up to take leadership positions.

Make no mistake, getting the National Broadband Plan right is going to take a Commission-wide effort. I want you to feel empowered. I want you to know that your ideas matter, that your work matters. You are about to embark upon an unparalleled process.

This will be a deeply fact-based and data-driven process. We're bringing experts in-house and reaching out to external academic partners. This will be a seriously open and participatory process. Workshops will be streamed online and allow for external participation.

Doing new things -- experimenting to benefit the public -- means there will be mistakes. That's fine. I expect them. They are inevitable. Don't sweat it. We will make mistakes, we will learn from them, and we will move forward. I am sure we will also get many things right. We will identify them, honor them, learn from what we do right and replicate it.

One more thing: we are going to do all of this without sufficient time, resources and infrastructure, which brings me to my final thought. We can do it. At first blush, the task before us might seem impossible. But I know that you're up for it, because of what I've seen from you since I arrived a month ago.

Over the past few weeks, I've been traveling around the building, visiting with as many bureaus and offices as possible. I've heard many great ideas -- but my biggest takeaway is that there's so much pent up energy in this building and desire to serve the public. You want to apply your talents to a big challenge. And here it is.

On behalf of my colleagues on the Commission -- Commissioners Copps and McDowell who did so much to get us off to a great start, Commissioners Clyburn and Baker who I know are enthusiastic about this effort -- and on behalf of the American people, I thank you.

One last thank you. Blair Levin, who agreed to become Executive Director of the Omnibus Broadband Initiative and lead this effort. There is no one more knowledgeable and respected in this space, and no better model of a public servant.

Please join me in applauding the efforts of this extraordinary team.