

**Prepared Remarks of  
Chairman Julius Genachowski  
Federal Communications Commission  
National Broadband Plan Workshop:  
eGovernment and Civic Engagement  
August 6, 2009**

Good morning. It's my pleasure to welcome you to the Omnibus Broadband Initiative's first public workshop. We currently plan to host nearly two dozen workshops in the next month, a goal some have said is impossible. To them, I say the Washington Nationals have won 4 straight.

We've got a great program lined up for you today, and I'd like to take a few minutes to put today's event into context.

As part of the Recovery Act, the President and Congress have entrusted the FCC with the responsibility of developing a National Broadband Plan, due in February. We should have had a plan years ago. The days of insufficient attention to this matter of vital national importance are over.

Broadband is the great infrastructure challenge of our generation.

It is to us what railroads, electricity, highways and telephones were to previous generations -- a platform for commerce, for democratic engagement, and for helping address major national challenges.

Bringing broadband to all Americans is not some abstract exercise. When you talk about universal broadband, a lot of Americans don't really grasp the implications of this project. One of the goals of these workshops is to illustrate clearly that access to broadband has real implications for real people and elicit suggestions and big ideas for our national Plan.

I've been able to see broadband's power through my own personal interactions.

This past weekend, I was at Valencia Gardens, a public housing project in San Francisco. I met people who, three years ago, didn't even know how to use a computer. Now, they have used the Internet to acquire technical skills and find jobs. I saw the same thing in Cleveland where broadband connections are connecting people to job opportunities.

I visited a world-class hospital in Palo Alto, California where specialists are using telemedicine to diagnose blindness-causing eye problems in newborn babies. I kept thinking, how can we live in a country where these services are not available to everyone? This affliction is very treatable, but there are very few doctors in the country with the skills to diagnose. Through broadband, all Americans could be served by these doctors.

One last story. I met a farmer in Erie, Pennsylvania who grew up thinking computers and connectivity had no relevance to him. He now thinks farmers can't live without broadband -- and real-time access to weather, commodity pricing, and agricultural information -- to do their jobs successfully. And he asked that we do everything we can to bring broadband to everyone, everywhere.

Here's the challenge: nearly 40% of all Americans do not have broadband in the home. And if you are earn less than \$50,000 a year, or you are a minority or you live in a rural area, chances are better than 60 percent that you are on the wrong side of the digital divide.

That is why President Obama and the Congress have taken two important actions to extend broadband's benefits to more Americans. First, they included \$7.2 billion for broadband deployment in the Recovery Act. Second, they have charged the FCC with developing a National Broadband plan.

We set out a series of goals for this project. We said that the process for developing the National Broadband Plan would be:

- The most open ever at FCC
- The most participatory ever at FCC
- The most data driven ever at FCC
- The most innovative ever at FCC, encouraging experimentation to find solutions and make sure the Commission meets this moment.

To help advance each of these goals, we made the unprecedented decided to host a series of 22 workshops. This is the first one. Since we will be trying new things, we expect mistakes. This hearing is being streamed live online. It is a real-time experiment in American democracy. Something will surely go wrong. We will recognize our mistakes and learn from them.

For our first workshop, I am pleased that we have chosen eGovernment and civic engagement as the topic. Why?

First, this public workshop gives us the FCC an opportunity to begin to show how we are going to use broadband to make government more open and to engage the public at our agency.

Second, everything flows from civic engagement. An active public offering its best ideas is the foundation of the solutions to all our challenges, and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is no excuse for not connecting every American with one another and their government.

These workshops will hopefully give us big ideas, while also laying the foundation for this entire project and creating a public record. They take on added importance, because the first round of filings in response to our notice of inquiry did not advance the ball forward.

The key to the success of these workshops will be the participants. The most important of which will be the American people. But we are also fortunate to be joined by some remarkable panelists. I would like to briefly introduce them.

We are joined by our nation's first Chief Information Officer Vivek Kundra, Beth Noveck, who is the Deputy Chief Technology Officer for Open Government at the White House, the Former Mayor Fort Wayne, Indiana Graham Richard, Norm Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute, Andrew Rasiej of the Personal Democracy Forum, Ellen Goodman of Rutgers School of Law, John Wonderlich of the Sunlight Foundatio, and Beth White of Chicago 2016 who is working to bring the Olympics to Chicago.

Finally, it is my pleasure to turn it over to our moderator, Eugene Huang, who will be working with the FCC's broadband team. Most recently, Eugene served at the Treasury Department, where he advised on U.S. economic relations with China, and previously he served as Virginia's Secretary of Technology. He, Vivek Kundra, and our nation's CTO Aneesh Chorpas prove that we have great innovators east of the Mississippi, as well.