

**Prepared Remarks of Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission**

“Digital Opportunity: A Broadband Plan for Children and Families”

**National Museum of American History
Washington, D.C.
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Wow. What a gathering. We’ve got scholars, child advocates, entrepreneurs, government officials, parents, children, and ... a monster.

Don’t worry – it’s the red, furry kind.

I want to thank my friends, Gary Knell and Jim Steyer, for those wonderful remarks.

Gary has been a tireless advocate for children for many years, and I want to thank him for his tremendous leadership at Sesame Workshop. Gary has built a super successful global organization around fun educational programming. We honor your success on behalf of kids in the U.S. and all over the world.

Jim Steyer kind of reminds me of a Sesame Street character – with his superhuman energy, optimism, and a core decency that drives everything he does. Jim is another world-class organization builder, driving Common Sense Media from an idea to tremendous success. Jim, thank you for all that you do.

I’m happy to welcome PBS’s terrific leader, CEO Paula Kerger. Thank you for being here.

Thank you to Yul Kwon and the outstanding Commission staff from the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, the Media Bureau, the Broadband Team, and the Audio Visual Office for pulling this terrific event together.

And thank you very much to Dr. Brent Glass for hosting us today at the Smithsonian’s Museum of American History.

I think it’s appropriate that we are having today’s discussion in this cathedral of human progress and American values, because these are truly historic times.

This museum gives us the chance to marvel at Alexander Graham Bell’s telephone prototype from 1876.

Bell’s awe-inspiring device transformed how we communicate. Today’s technology is transforming nothing less than how we live.

Think about when you grew up. Now fast forward to today.

Almost everything is changing: how we receive and send news, information, and entertainment; how we stay in touch with our friends and family; how we work and run our businesses; how we—and people across the globe—learn about government and express points of view.

When I was a kid, my family had one TV in the living room and one in the basement. Those were the only screens in the house. My parents had TV-watching rules that were easy to describe and easy to enforce (at least they thought so). Now it's a whole new world, filled with many more screens – and with powerful opportunity, serious challenges, and lots of confusion.

Today, I want to talk about what these revolutionary times mean for our children and how we can seize the opportunities, tackle the challenges and hopefully bring some common sense – thank you Jim – to this complicated landscape.

Let me start by outlining a few core principles that guide us as we develop initiatives around kids, media, and technology.

- First, children are our most precious national resource. We must do everything we can to educate and prepare them to thrive in the 21st century, and keep them safe.
- Second, empowering parents is an essential strategy in this area.
- Third, the government has an appropriate, if limited, role to play.
- Fourth, the First Amendment is a core American value that must be honored.
- Fifth, markets have untapped potential to drive innovative solutions.

And finally:

- So does technology. We can't slow down technology; we shouldn't try. We should pursue strategies to unleash technology solutions to technology-related problems.

OPPORTUNITIES

The main reason we are so eager to embrace the future and the technologies of the digital age is that they are ushering in a wave of unprecedented opportunity.

High-speed Internet and digital technology allow new ideas and creations to be shared with anyone – and downloaded by everyone. It spreads opportunity farther, faster, and more equitably than any other medium ever invented.

It has the potential to improve every aspect of our children's lives—not only while they're young, but also as they become participants in our economy and our democracy.

Just imagine the possibilities.

Look at education. With online learning, kids anywhere in the country can have access to the best teachers in the world, and access up-to-date e-textbooks and high-quality tutoring from teachers around America.

The benefits of digital learning aren't just theoretical. They're real. One study found that low-income children who use the Internet more at home had higher GPAs and standardized test scores than children who use it less.

Consider healthcare. Broadband can connect doctors and medical information anywhere with patients everywhere. The Palo Alto hospital is using broadband to prevent curable blindness in newborns many miles away. Today, this is the exception; it ought to be the rule.

Think about the ability of young people to compete in the 21st century economy. Getting online early gives children the skills they will need for the higher-paying jobs of tomorrow. Broadband enables a small-town teenager with big dreams to bring those dreams to life and share them with the world.

Consider technology's potential to strengthen democracy and teach our children democratic values. Digital technologies can help children learn the importance of free speech and political expression, preparing them to become active and informed citizens of a vibrant democracy.

CHALLENGES

In the digital age, the opportunities are real. But so are the risks.

New technologies can expose our children to new dangers, and can potentially outpace the ability of parents to guide their children.

If you're a parent who thinks change is scary, the digital revolution is like "The Shining" – in 3D.

A recent Kaiser study found that children consume recreational media 7-and-a-half hours a day, and are consuming nearly 11 hours' worth of content. When the same study came out in 2004 and reported 6 hours of daily media consumption, experts said it was impossible for the number to go higher. Apparently, mobile phones and the Internet have pierced the space-time continuum.

Instinctively, these numbers have us concerned. The finding that heavy media users are more than twice as likely as light users to have bad grades suggests that we should trust our instincts.

So parents are left asking if they should be embracing these new technologies or worrying about them.

The answer: We have to do both.

CHILDREN’S AGENDA FOR DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY

The FCC will work to do both with our Children’s Agenda for Digital Opportunity, which I’m happy to announce today. This strategy builds on four core pillars: digital access, digital literacy, digital citizenship, and digital safety.

Digital Access

Let’s start with digital access. And let’s start by setting a clear and non-negotiable goal: every child should be connected to broadband.

Unfortunately, more than 13 million school-age children don’t have broadband at home, and many have only limited access to broadband connections at school. That means 25 percent of U.S. children – one out every four kids – are missing out on the opportunities of broadband.

Our broadband record shows that children in greatest need are those with parents who are poor, less educated, in rural America, or minorities. For example, while 82 percent of white parents with children have broadband at home, that number plummets to 45 percent for Hispanic families.

If you’re a teenager, and your parents make less than \$20,000 a year, you are less than half as likely to have broadband at home as a classmate whose parents make more than \$75,000.

We need to ensure that all of our nation’s children have access to broadband. Anything less than 100 percent is not good enough.

Digital Literacy

The next pillar we have to address is making sure that our children are digitally literate.

Digital literacy doesn’t just mean teaching children basic digital skills like getting online, using software and search – though it means that, and that’s important.

It also means teaching kids to think analytically, critically and creatively, so that they can find relevant information, assess the accuracy and reliability of that information, distinguish fact from opinion, and create and share new content.

Related, we also have to teach our children to become media literate so that they can evaluate media content and recognize advertising for what it is.

Both digital and media literacy skills are particularly critical given, as we’ve heard, the average American child today spends more time with digital or analog media than they spend in school – or even sleeping.

Unfortunately, many children are not learning effective digital or media literacy skills at home or at school. In fact, many parents and teachers tell us that they don't sufficiently understand digital technology, much less know how to teach kids about how use it effectively.

Digital literacy isn't just a good idea – it's increasingly a job requirement, and a citizenship requirement.

Digital Citizenship

And speaking of citizenship, helping our children benefit from digital technology isn't just about giving them access and teaching them to use tools effectively.

We also have to teach them how to become responsible members of a larger digital community. This is digital citizenship.

Digital citizenship means the values, ethics, and social norms that allow virtual communities, including social networks, to function smoothly. It means having norms of behavior that facilitate constructive interaction and promote trust.

Digital citizenship also means the ability to participate in a modern digital economy and a vibrant digital democracy.

Unlike communities in the real world, digital communities face some unique challenges.

People can remain anonymous or change identities, allowing them to act without regard to consequences.

These challenges raise some hard questions for parents and policymakers.

How do we create a framework of online norms and values? Who determines what these values and norms should be? How do we reinforce real-world values to our children, and teach them to behave in a positive and responsible manner online?

Digital Safety

This brings me to the fourth component of our agenda, and one of the first things that jumps into parents' minds when they think about their kids being online – safety.

What are some of the risks that children face in the digital age?

Harassment. 43 percent of kids have been cyberbullied, but only 10 percent tell someone about it.

Harmful Websites. 35 percent of eating disorder patients visit pro-anorexia websites.

Distracted Driving. A quarter of U.S. teens with cell phones say they have texted while driving. According to the National Highway Transportation Safety Board, 80 percent of fatal teen accidents are caused by distracted driving.

Inappropriate Advertising. How many of you have seen a Viagra ad or a scary movie trailer while watching sports or other family TV with your young kids? By the way, how often do you see an ad for a healthy food product during children's programming?

NATIONAL BROADBAND PLAN

Digital Access, Digital Literacy, Digital Citizenship, and Digital Safety. These are urgent challenges. These are challenges worthy of a national plan.

In just a few days, the FCC will release such a plan – a National Broadband Plan to bring high-speed Internet to all Americans.

The Plan will take a giant step in ensuring that every child and family in America will benefit from digital opportunities.

How?

First, we will propose ways to get every child connected.

The plan will recommend modernizing the Universal Service Fund so that it supports broadband instead of plain old telephone service. USF has worked for kids and families all over America in the 20th century – and we can reform it to work for kids and families in the 21st century. This proposal, which we can accomplish over time without increasing the growth of the fund, will make broadband more affordable to low-income families and help millions of kids all over the country get connected at home.

We're going to update our E-rate program for schools and libraries. For example, we will permanently allow schools to use E-rate funded resources for their communities during off-school hours, which will let more families get online.

Second, we will work to make sure that every child is digitally literate and can benefit from digital learning.

The Plan will recommend the establishment of a National Digital Literacy Program, with three parts.

- An Online Digital Literacy Portal will allow any child, parent, or teacher with a broadband connection to take courses on digital literacy.
- A Digital Literacy Corps will mobilize thousands of technically-trained youths and adults to train non-adopters, including families that are hard to reach because of cultural and language barriers.

- We'll push for libraries and other community centers to have more broadband capacity so that they can continue to help families become digitally literate.

Third, we're going to promote digital citizenship by working together across government, industry, and the nonprofit sector to start a national dialogue, identify best practices, develop model norms, and engage in outreach and education to online communities.

Fourth, we will keep our children safe by marshaling resources across the federal government to focus on online safety.

I am proud to have worked with FTC Chairman John Leibowitz, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, and the other members of Onguard Online, to publish *Net Cetera*, a guide for parents on how to talk to their kids about online safety.

We must continue to work closely together in this area. Given the convergence of technology and the blurring of jurisdictional boundaries, interagency efforts are essential to addressing online safety risks.

To do this, the National Broadband Plan proposes creating an interagency working group on child online safety. This group will work with nonprofit and industry partners to find solutions to the biggest risks that children face online.

BEYOND THE NATIONAL BROADBAND PLAN

Of course, the Commission's work on our Children's Agenda for Digital Opportunity will extend beyond the National Broadband Plan.

We need to continue our efforts to eliminate distracted driving by educating drivers, especially young drivers, and unleashing technology that can check the temptation to text while driving.

We need to review our Commission rules to see if they are keeping pace with new technologies - starting with the Children's Television Act. We will ask hard questions about how broadcasters are fulfilling the letter and the spirit of the Children's Television Act, and whether and how the Act or our rules should be updated for the digital age.

We will look hard at our rules implementing the advertising provisions of the Children's Television Act, which imposed limits on commercial advertising on programming directed at children.

In today's digital world, shouldn't interactive ads aimed at young kids require a parental opt-in?

And about that question I asked earlier: how often do you see an ad for a healthy food product during children's programming?

Let me tell you the answer. A child has to watch ten hours of children's television programs to find one truly healthy food ad. In that same time period, he or she would have seen 75 other foods ads, 55 for unhealthy foods.

No wonder that childhood obesity rates have tripled over the past 30 years.

First Lady Michelle Obama recently launched a nationwide campaign to combat childhood obesity, an epidemic that endangers the health of millions of children.

I'm honored to be part of the new Presidential Task Force on Childhood Obesity, and I look forward to being part of the effort to develop a comprehensive strategy for achieving the First Lady's goal of eliminating this problem within a generation.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Those are some of the things we can do out of Washington. But of course government is no substitute for parents.

And let's spend time focusing not on what kids and parents can't do, but what they can.

So what can parents do?

- Get informed by seeking out online resources for parents – before long, we plan to have great online resources for parents and the kids at the soon-to-be-revamped FCC.gov.
- Communicate a positive message about technology to your children;
- Set rules for your kids on using digital technology and media;
- Engage with your kids so that using technology becomes a shared experience;
- Teach them that personal responsibility and offline values don't end when they go online; and
- Reinforce basic social norms that encourage responsible use of digital technology and responsible online behavior.

Look, I'm the FCC Chairman; I'm not the Daddy-in-Chief. But kids do listen to their parents – they want to know what we think is right and wrong.

THE ROLE OF INDUSTRY AND NONPROFITS

Of course, parents need all the support they can get. We have to work together to create a digital ecosystem that is not only open, but safe.

And we need all the help we can get. In the nonprofit world, several organizations are leading the way on children's online safety issues. I want to recognize their contributions and offer my support.

Public media has been serving the educational needs of children for decades. I applaud the efforts of Paula Kerger and her staff at PBS for bringing public media into the digital age.

Media companies are breaking new ground for innovative content and delivery. The Sesame Workshop has long been the gold standard in this field. Commercial media companies – like Discovery, Viacom, and Disney – are also stepping up to the plate. For example, Discovery Education helps over one million educators and 35 million students connect to a world of learning through broadband.

I salute the growing efforts of private companies to take the issue of online safety seriously. Companies like Facebook, MySpace, Google, Yahoo, Microsoft, Sprint, Verizon, and AT&T have worked hard on online safety tools, policies, and campaigns. I encourage them to continue their efforts, and other companies to sign on.

I also look forward to working on strategies to tackle some of the gnawing problems in this area. For example, while parental control and filtering technologies have improved over the years, at least online, they are still only used by a small fraction of the population.

How can we incentivize entrepreneurs to create tools that are easier to use and provide a wider range of functionality across different platforms? How can we communicate the availability of these tools to parents more clearly and effectively?

And how can we accelerate the development of business models that give parents what we know they want: the ability to steer kids toward quality and educational entertainment, and filter out what they find objectionable?

Working together, there's no reason why we can't come up with innovation and technology-based solutions to empower parents and protect our most precious national resource – our children.

NEXT STEPS

To tackle these and the other questions and issues I've raised in these remarks, and with the help of the committed staff of the FCC, in the weeks ahead I will be organizing a series of roundtables with key stakeholders in different sectors. I will ask participants to propose solutions and action plans for addressing the major challenges children face in the digital world.

At the end of the year, I will hold a Children's Summit to evaluate the progress that's been made, and determine where we need a more aggressive response.

The kick off event will be a technology roundtable in Silicon Valley.

I look forward to working with all stakeholders – including media companies, apps developers, children’s and consumer advocates, educators and researchers, parents and children – in the months ahead.

By putting our hearts and minds together, we can build an ambitious agenda that will allow our children to ride the digital revolution to new heights, and then come home safely.

Thank you.

DISCUSSION WITH ELMO

And now, I'd like to invite some special guests into the room for a very special treat.

Come on in kids, have a seat in the front row.

[Wait until kids are all seated]

Hey kids! Thank you coming today. A very special guest has come a long way to see you.....

ELMO: Excuse Elmo! Pardon Elmo!

CHAIRMAN: Elmo, is that you?

ELMO: Oh hello, Mr. Julius!

CHAIRMAN: What are you doing here, Elmo?

ELMO: Oh, Elmo loves the National Museum of American History. There’s so much for Elmo to see here – like Dizzy Gillespie’s trumpet, and President George Washington’s candleholder.

CHAIRMAN: So you like jazz and history, Elmo?

ELMO: Yeah! Elmo loves history! And you know what else?

CHAIRMAN: What, Elmo?

ELMO: Elmo heard Mr. Gary was going to be here, and wherever Mr. Gary goes - Elmo goes. (TO GARY IN AUDIENCE) Isn’t that right, Mr. Gary? (BEAT) Elmo’s just kidding. Elmo really wants to know what Mr. Julius is doing here?

CHAIRMAN: Well, I’m here for my job, Elmo.

ELMO: What job does Mr. Julius have?

CHAIRMAN: I’m a chairman.

ELMO: Ooh, does that mean Mr. Julius is a superhero?

CHAIRMAN: A superhero?

ELMO: Yeah! (LIKE AN ANNOUNCER) He's part man, part recliner. He'll let the weary sit on him, he is the Chairman!

CHAIRMAN: Although, a chairman is not actually a hero, Elmo, it just means I'm the head of something.

ELMO: Ohhhh! Excuse, Elmo. So, what is Chairman Julius the head of?

CHAIRMAN: The FCC.

ELMO: Chairman Julius is the chairman of the Funky Chicken Club? Cool!

CHAIRMAN: No, Elmo the FCC I'm talking about is the Federal Communications Commission.

ELMO: Elmo knows those are words, but Elmo has no idea what they mean all together.

CHAIRMAN: It just means that at the FCC we help take care of things like TV and radio – and we work to make sure that everyone has access to the Internet.

ELMO: Oh boy, Elmo loves the Internet!

CHAIRMAN: You do?

ELMO: Yeah! Elmo loves to play educational games on the Internet, and Elmo loves to listen to music on the Internet, and Elmo loves to watch videos on the Internet!

CHAIRMAN: Yes, Elmo, the Internet can be fun, informative and educational.

ELMO: Yeah! But Elmo has one problem, and maybe Chairman Julius can help.

CHAIRMAN: What is it, Elmo?

ELMO: Elmo's Internet is too slow!

CHAIRMAN: It is?

ELMO: Yes! Elmo is tired of buffering!

CHAIRMAN: Too much buffering?

ELMO: Yes! No more buffering! Elmo doesn't want to buffer any longer! Elmo is totally buffered out!

CHAIRMAN: I get it. You are not fond of buffering!

ELMO: No! Elmo wants his Internet fast, fast, fast!

CHAIRMAN: Well, that's actually what I'm here to talk about, Elmo—making the Internet faster and making sure that everyone can use it!

ELMO: Chairman Julius is?

CHAIRMAN: Yes! And we can do that through something called the National Broadband Plan!

ELMO: Broadband? What's that? A new music group?

CHAIRMAN: No, Elmo! Broadband is a great way for kids to access all kinds of educational materials, videos and games that are fun and help them learn.

ELMO: Is it fast, fast, fast?!

CHAIRMAN: Yes! Fast, fast, fast!

ELMO: Yeah baby!

CHAIRMAN: And not only that, the National Broadband Plan will help lots of kids and families who have no Internet access to get on the Web!

ELMO: Yay! Everyone should be able to use the Internet!

CHAIRMAN: That's what I think too, Elmo! And we also want to help kids use it safely so that they can learn a lot.

ELMO: That's great, Chairman Julius! Keep up the good work!

CHAIRMAN: Thanks, Elmo!

ELMO: Now if Chairman Julius will excuse Elmo, Elmo has to go check out the exhibits here...Does anyone know where my friend Kermit the Frog is? Have fun fixing the Internet!

CHAIRMAN: Bye, Elmo!

ELMO: Bye everybody!

ELMO EXITS.

CHAIRMAN: Wasn't that great, kids! It's time for me to go, too. Thank you all for coming today.