



NEWS

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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC PROGRAM TO EXPAND INVESTMENT IN BROADBAND HEALTH CARE TECHNOLOGY

*Affordable Broadband Would Improve Care in Medically Underserved Communities,
Cut Health Costs*

Washington, D.C. -- The Federal Communications Commission today introduced a new health care connectivity program that would expand investment in broadband for medically underserved communities across the country. The program would give patients in rural areas access to state-of-the-art diagnostic tools typically available only in the largest and most sophisticated medical centers.

The program's investment in broadband connectivity would not only improve medical care, but also help reduce health-care costs. It would spur private investment in networks as well as health-related applications, and would help create jobs that range from building infrastructure to developing and implementing health IT solutions. This program has the potential to do for rural health care providers and patients what the enormously successful E-Rate program has done for schools and students.

Currently, too many clinics and hospitals lack affordable access to even basic broadband connectivity to handle the most basic of telehealth tasks, like managing medical records, transmitting an x-ray or MRI, or consulting remotely with a doctor. In fact, nearly 30 percent of federally funded rural health care clinics can't afford secure and reliable broadband services. Shockingly, only eight percent of Indian Health Service providers even have access to the broadband they would need to deliver advanced health care to their patients.

This program would invest up to \$400 million annually to enable doctors, nurses, hospitals and clinics to deliver, through communications technology, world-class health care to patients, no matter where they live. It is one of four programs in the Universal Service Fund administered by the FCC. Without increasing the projected size of the overall fund, the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking adopted today would bring affordable broadband connectivity to more than 2,000 rural hospitals and clinics. It builds on the lessons learned in the successful Rural Health Care Pilot Program -- launched in 2007 and set to expire next year -- and is consistent with the recommendations in the FCC's National Broadband Plan.

Proposals include:

- **Partner with public and nonprofit health care providers to invest millions in new regional and statewide broadband networks in parts of the country where it is unavailable or insufficient.** The new program would help build cost-effective broadband networks -- connecting doctors, hospitals and clinics -- designed to meet today's health care needs.
- **Making broadband connectivity more affordable by sharing half of the monthly recurring network costs with hospitals, clinics and other health care providers.** This enhanced support for broadband connectivity will benefit patients served by thousands of public and non-profit rural health care providers.
- **Delivering connectivity where it is needed most today,** including at skilled nursing facilities and renal dialysis centers, along with off-site administrative offices and data centers that perform support functions critical to health care networks.

Action by the Commission, June 15, 2010, by Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 10-125). Chairman Genachowski, Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn, and Baker. Chairman Genachowski, Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn and Baker issuing separate statements

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