

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

72nd Communications Workers of America Conference

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Thank you Larry Cohen for that introduction and for your leadership.

I'm glad to see other members of your leadership team: Annie Hill, Jeff Rechenbach and members of your Executive Board.

Bernie Lunzer, (President of the Newspaper Guild) and Jim Joyce, (President of NBET) are here. I want to thank them for their participation in the FCC's Future of the Media project.

Last time I was in this room, it was for an annual event called the Chairman's Dinner.

The premise: every telecom lawyer in DC gathers in *this* room, and the Chairman of the FCC tries to make them laugh by telling jokes.

I emphasize *try*.

Let's just say it can get ugly. Hopefully, I can avoid any traumatic flashbacks until my speech is over.

Thank you all for welcoming me and, more important, for what you do.

The proverbial bridge to the 21st century isn't made of bricks and concrete. It's made of copper and fiber.

You helped build it, and are helping every day -- connecting our people, driving our economy, and strengthening our communities.

CWA has always been at the cutting edge of technology and change, and America is looking to you build and maintain the networks of the future.

I take comfort in knowledge that the skilled union workers of CWA are here to make sure that our communications infrastructure will be world-class.

We are today at a crossroads.

We are seeing the explosion of new communications technology that has changed how we connect to family and friends, how we work, how we participate in our great democracy.

And we are on the verge of new breakthroughs that can vastly improve our economy and catalyze real investment and job creation; and that can also advance core goals such as improving education and health care.

These breakthroughs are reminiscent of when landline telephone began finding its way into every home – an achievement that you helped make possible.

Another apt analogy is the advent of electricity in the 20th century, which transformed virtually every aspect of our society.

At the FCC, we think about what we can learn from history – because it's vital that we lead the world in innovation and job creation in the 21st century, as we did in the 20th.

And I agree with CWA: broadband is a fundamental building block to a successful economic future.

Broadband is an indispensable infrastructure of the digital age – powering everything from our personal devices to the global economy.

Broadband is our 21st century platform for economic opportunity.

Multiple studies tell us the same thing: higher broadband adoption equals more jobs.

An investment in broadband networks today is an investment in economic growth tomorrow.

Broadband is also our 21st century platform for solutions to major national challenges such as education, health care, energy, and public safety.

And broadband is our 21st century platform for citizen engagement and for effective and efficient government.

Given the importance of broadband, it's important that we ask ourselves, “How are we doing?”

Congress actually requires that we answer that question once a year. And just last week, FCC staff prepared our answer, to which a majority of the Commission agreed.

The report found that, while an impressive percentage of Americans have some access to broadband, up to 24 million people who live in rural America do not.

They can't get high-speed Internet, and we're not on track for timely deployment to those citizens.

In addition, our average broadband speeds in the U.S are too low, as are our broadband adoption rates.

Some people saw this report and said, "Mission accomplished" when it comes to broadband in America. Nothing more to do.

I fundamentally disagree.

When up to 24 million Americans don't have access to a communications technology that is essential to participation in our 21st century economy and democracy, I say that is unacceptable.

We are not where we should be. Not where we must be.

We are risk in the global race for leadership in innovation.

We are at risk that the next generation of communications-related jobs will be created overseas instead of the U.S.

I don't think we should rest until we connect every corner of this country, and lead the world in broadband.

Instead of patting ourselves on the back, we need to get to work.

According to multiple studies, the U.S. is not in the top 10 globally when it comes to broadband speeds and penetration. We've got work to do.

An important study ranked the U.S. ranks 40th out of 40 industrial countries in "the rate of change in innovative capacity." We've got work to do.

Consumers in Japan and France are paying less for broadband and getting faster connections. We've got work to do.

Ninety-three million Americans – 35% of our citizens -- have not adopted broadband. We've got work to do.

The adoption rate among low-income Americans, minorities, people with disabilities, seniors – all less than 50%. In Indian country, a sad 10%. We've got work to do.

These low adoption rates are a cause for concern not only because of their impact on America's capacity to lead the world in innovation – but also because the costs of digital exclusion are rising.

Example: Job postings of more and more companies are moving to the Web, and require online applications. If you don't have online access and digital skills, you increasingly can't find or land a job.

At one time, broadband may have been a convenience. Now, it is essential to 21st century citizenship

You get it. Four years ago, CWA started a campaign called SpeedMatters, which called for government action in partnership with the private sector to stimulate broadband investment and adoption in America.

You said – quote – “We are falling behind because the United States is the only industrialized country without a national policy to promote universal, affordable high speed Internet access.

Congress and the White House heard your call, and as part of the Recovery Act, the FCC was asked to develop America's first-ever National Broadband Plan, which we released in March.

The Plan is an ambitious strategy to promote private investment and job creation by building a world-class broadband infrastructure that unleashes innovation and brings the benefits of high-speed Internet to all Americans.

Achieving these goals will drive not only economic growth and our global competitiveness, it will drive solutions to national challenges like health and education, will help us build sustainable communities, and will encourage broad participation in our democracy, and a more effective and efficient government.

So what exactly is in the Plan?

First, we set ambitious goals. A common theme of these goals – if you will allow me to borrow your phrase: speed matters.

We call for affordable 100 megabit per second connections to 100 million households by 2020 – our 100 squared initiative. And affordable 50 megabits to 100 million homes by 2015.

We set a goal of at least 1 gigabit-per-second service to at least one anchor institution in every community in the country.

For Universal Service funding, we target an initial minimum speed of 4 megabits-per-second – a 20-fold increase over the old 200 kilobit standard, and faster than many other countries’. And we expect that 4 megabit standard to evolve over time.

These would all be actual speeds, by the way; not merely ‘as advertised’.

We set a goal of 90% broadband adoption by 2020, on the way to 100%. This would be an adoption curve for broadband faster than the adoption rate for telephone service.

To achieve these goals, the Plan includes concrete recommendations on infrastructure deployment, adoption, and the development of innovative solutions to national challenges.

We at the FCC, as well as other federal agencies, are already moving aggressively to implement many of these recommendations.

Let’s start with infrastructure deployment.

The plan calls for the removal of barriers and the smart allocation of government resources to encourage private investment in both wired and wireless networks.

We are moving on this—for example, by our order cutting red tape to increase the speed of tower-siting, and by the proceeding we initiated to provide timely, economical access to poles and rights-of-way.

The plan calls for the reallocation of 500 Megahertz of spectrum, so that we have a mobile infrastructure that leads the world in speed, service, and innovation.

The President recently endorsed this proposal and launched the administration’s Wireless Broadband Initiative to free up spectrum and catalyze more private investment and job creation around mobile networks.

The Plan also proposes modernizing our Universal Service Fund from supporting yesterday’s telephone service to tomorrow’s broadband access service.

This will provide resources for the deployment of broadband to locations where there is no private sector business case for investment without a meaningful public-private partnership.

These proposals to drive broadband deployment and speeds will create new jobs in building and operating the network, and at the edge of the network.

Now how do we increase broadband adoption?

One significant barrier to broadband adoption is affordability. And so we propose transforming our Lifeline and Linkup programs, which help needy people pay their telephone bills, to apply to broadband.

Another barrier to adoption is digital literacy. The Plan proposes establishing a Digital Literacy Corps to make sure all Americans have the skills they need to be active participants in 21st century society.

The plan also includes solutions to national challenges like education, health care and energy.

Take health care.

CWA has worked tirelessly through the years to make sure every person in America has access to high-quality, affordable health care. You just scored a major victory on this front. This plan would build on the progress you helped make possible.

Nearly 30 percent of federally funded rural clinics lack access to even mass-market broadband.

We need to connect these facilities.

Two weeks ago, the Commission moved forward with a proceeding to modernize our rural health care program and extend connectivity in a significant way to clinics and hospitals that now have no or inadequate service.

Just a few hours ago, I was with FDA Commissioner Peggy Hamburg to announce that our agencies will be moving forward on the Broadband Plan's recommendation to unleash investment in communications-related medical devices by increasing the predictability and speed of regulatory approvals, while protecting the public's health and safety.

I believe these initiatives can catalyze the spending of investment dollars sitting on the sidelines, spur innovation and the launch of new devices and infrastructure, and create jobs.

In the early 20th century, America's communications workers helped build and service a telephone network that connected our nation and forever changed the way we communicate.

Today, our nation faces a new infrastructure challenge, whose potential to transform our economy and our nation is even greater.

Building and maintaining a world-leading broadband infrastructure that is available to all Americans will drive robust economic growth and job creation, and improve our global competitiveness.

It will open up new worlds of learning for our children; improve the quality of health care while reducing costs; empower first responders and make our communities safer.

It will help us realize the fundamental promise opportunity for all, of course a bedrock principle of our nation.

As I said earlier, we're not where we need to be.

No one knows more than you about what it takes to get things done in our communities and in Washington.

We need your input and your help to seize the opportunities of the Internet, and bring the benefits of broadband to all Americans.

We've got work to do.

With your help, we can succeed.

Thank you.