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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

June 16, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554


Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write to share my thoughts about the National Broadband Plan (NBP) and its potential impact on rural areas. I share your goal of ensuring affordable access to robust broadband service for every American and commend your attention to this important issue. Approximately 100 million Americans, many who live in rural areas, do not have broadband internet service at home. Key to extending broadband service to these areas will be reforms of the Universal Service fund that support broadband deployment. As you craft the policies that will achieve these goals, I urge you to consider the impact of your current proposal on rural communities.

In particular, I am concerned that some of the proposals contained within the NBP have the potential to set the United States on a course toward a greater technological and economic divide between urban and rural areas. For example, while the plan sets a long-term goal of ensuring 100 megabits per second (Mbps) download speeds for 100 million homes, it sets a goal of only 4 Mbps for rural areas. Setting two such divergent standards may only exacerbate the current technological divide between urban and rural areas, thereby limiting the ability of rural consumers and businesses to take full advantage of all the social and economic benefits that access to broadband affords. Further, it could impair the ability of telecommunications carriers to make investments necessary to deploy broadband services in our most rural areas.

I share the concerns of my constituents and others in rural areas around the country about the potential impact of the proposals in the National Broadband Plan on their ability to receive affordable broadband service. I request that you seriously consider these concerns as you implement the plan's recommendations and take the appropriate steps to ensure all Americans play a role in, and benefit from, the promise of broadband.

Sincerely,


Stephanie Hersheth Sandlin
Member of Congress

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