

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 10, 2010

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

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

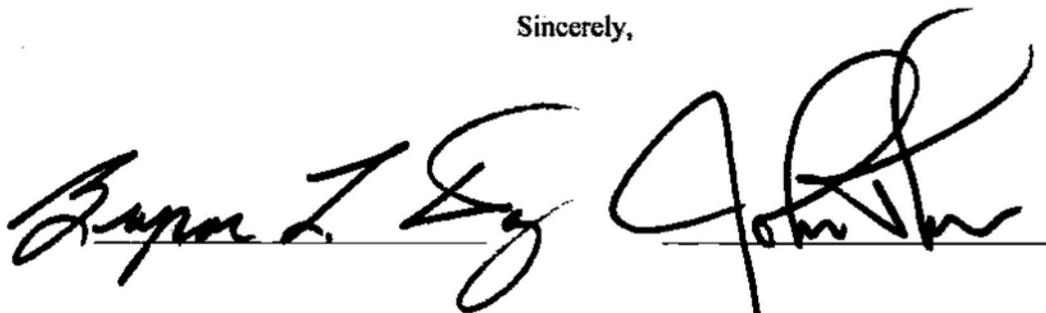
We write to share our thoughts on the National Broadband Plan (NBP). We applaud the goal that you have set for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to ensure that every American has affordable access to robust broadband service. We appreciate your focus on reform of the universal service fund and the need to explicitly support broadband as an important step in this process. As you craft the policies to achieve these goals, you must consider the impact of your proposals on rural America.

In the Recovery Act, Congress directed the FCC to conduct "an analysis of the most effective and efficient mechanisms for ensuring broadband access by *all people* of the United States." Consistent with the purposes laid out by Congress, the NBP contemplates the great social and economic benefits that broadband access brings – including increased educational and employment opportunity, improved health care, and greater energy efficiency. We know our shared goal is to ensure that every American, whether in Boston, Bismarck, Brattleboro or Barrow, can reap these benefits.

Our concern is that some of the proposals in the NBP have the potential to set the United States on a course toward a greater digital divide between urban and rural areas. For example, while trumpeting the benefits of broadband at 100 megabits per second (Mbps) for 100 million homes, the NBP also moves to transition the universal service fund to support broadband offerings at 4 Mbps. The practical impact is two very different goals for rural regions and more densely populated areas. Establishing such a low threshold for rural residents and businesses relegates them to second class broadband capacity. It hinders their ability to share in the transformative vision for broadband outlined in the NBP.

Rural Americans and businesses are understandably concerned about the impact of the proposals in the National Broadband Plan on their ability to receive comparable and affordable broadband service. We urge you to 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,



Al Franken

Mark Udall

Herb Kohl

Amy Klobuchar

Kent Conrad

Tom Feeney

Myrland Buehler

Mark Amodeo

Tom Harkin

Joe Donnelly

Leah Ruckelshaus

Chuck Grassley

Jim Johnson

Rob Portman

Patricia Leach

John Barrasso

Mark Begich

Jeffrey A. Merkley

Jill Blumstein

Ron Wyden