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[www.house.gov/etheridge](http://www.house.gov/etheridge)

September 3, 2010

Mr. Julius Genachowski  
Federal Communications Commission  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write to share my concern about the potential negative implication for rural Americans of the National Broadband Plan, and to offer my support for the upgrade of infrastructure to connect rural health care providers.

The National Broadband Plan as currently defined risks instituting a dangerous digital divide between rural and urban areas. Specifically, I am concerned about the definition of broadband being 4 Mbps for rural areas and 100 Mbps in urban areas. There is no reason that rural users should be relegated to a second-class system with information available at 4 percent of the rate of those in urban areas. In fact, there is an argument to be made that rural users require at least as good broadband infrastructure as urban areas.

As our information technology becomes more robust, we are increasingly recognizing the potential of rapid data transmission to improve the lives of America. Nowhere is this potential clearer than in applications of health IT in rural areas. I support the Federal Communications Commission's investment in a permanent fund to support the upgrade of infrastructure to connect rural health care providers. The announcement of this investment in the Rural Health Care Program as part of the National Broadband Plan on July 15, 2010 can help citizens in North Carolina. The proposed health care goals in the health IT component arguably require more than 4 Mbps.

Local independent communications carriers have for a century built infrastructure and provided service to rural and under-served communities. This growth has been possible in no small part because of the consistent support of the Universal Service Fund. Over one hundred years ago the national commitment to universal service was created as, "one system, one policy, and universal service". The current proposal risks two policies, and second-tier service for rural America.

I ask that you consider the possible economic, medical, and social implication of this remarkable change in the national universal service commitment. The final National Broadband

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Mr. Julius Genachowski

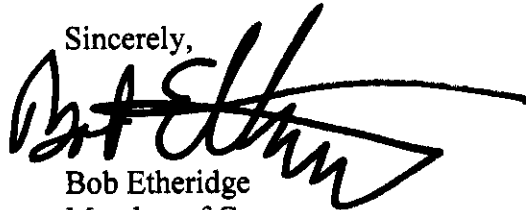
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Plan must be modified to be truly national, so that every American is served by high quality, high bandwidth service worthy of the label "broadband."

Thank you in advance for your consideration, and for your continued work on our nation's communications systems that are so important for rural America. If you have any questions, or would like to meet to discuss this further, please contact Jean Camp my office at 202-225-4531.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Etheridge", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Bob Etheridge  
Member of Congress

BE:JC