

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

League of United Latin American Citizens Legislative Conference

**Washington, D.C.
February 10, 2011**

Thank you Margaret Moran, Brent Wilkes and everyone at LULAC for welcoming me here this evening.

In particular, thank you for not scheduling me to speak after Daniel Hernandez. It's fun to bask in the glow of a national hero, as long as you're not the person who has to follow him.

Congratulations to Daniel and to tonight's other honorees – Senator Lugar, Resident Commissioner Pierluisi, and State Representative Martinez-Fischer.

I'm honored to be joined by Secretary Ken Salazar as one of tonight's guest speakers.

You may be wondering why the head of the a technology agency is here tonight. It makes more sense that most people would realize.

At its core, LULAC's mission is to promote equal opportunity.

In our 21st century digital economy, broadband – high-speed Internet – is the great equalizer – giving every American with an Internet connection access to a world of new opportunities that might previously have been beyond their reach.

That's why LULAC hosted a session on broadband as part of this conference.

That's why LULAC has built a network of 60 state-of-the art technology centers in Latino communities across the country.

And that's why LULAC is a partner to One Economy's Digital Connectors program – an initiative that teaches young people digital skills, and in return, these individuals are asked to train people in their communities.

In 2009, I had a chance to visit a Digital Connectors site: Valencia Gardens, a public housing project in the Mission District of San Francisco.

I met kids who were participating in the program were beaming with hope and optimism. With their digital skills, they felt empowered and ready to take on the world.

On the flip side, they told me about their neighbors who were being left behind – people who didn't know how to get online and others who didn't even care to try.

In many ways, Valencia Gardens offers a snapshot of the broadband landscape.

High-speed Internet is reshaping our lives more profoundly than any technology since electricity, but too many Americans are being bypassed by the broadband revolution. Roughly one-third of Americans have not adopted broadband, and certain communities, including Latinos, are disproportionately likely to be on the wrong side of the digital divide. About half of Hispanics are online, but only 20% of non-English speaking Americans are connected.

Why is it so urgent that we close this digital divide? I'll give you two reasons.

First, connecting all Americans is essential to our economic growth and our global competitiveness.

We're not going to create the jobs of the future—in the near-term and the long-run—unless we connect all Americans.

Second, we need to close the digital divide because the costs of digital exclusion are rising.

Broadband is essential to economic opportunity. Job listings are moving exclusively online. Increasingly, if you're not connected you can't find a job.

Consider small businesses. If a business doesn't take advantage of the Internet's capacity to reach more customers and improve efficiency, it can't compete with those who do.

Broadband is essential to educational opportunity. More and more, students need to go online to complete their homework assignments and parents rely on email to communicate with teachers. At the FCC, we got a letter from the mother of a 17-year-old girl in Alachua County, Florida who's doing her homework in the parking lot of the local library at night, because her family can't get broadband at home and the library's hot spot is her only option.

Broadband is essential to health care opportunities. Broadband enables potentially life-saving remote monitoring technologies for people with diabetes or heart disease, but you need a high-speed connection to take advantage.

Broadband is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity for full participation in the 21st century economy and society.

That's why we at the FCC developed the National Broadband Plan, an ambitious strategy to build a world-class broadband infrastructure that brings the benefits of high-speed Internet to all Americans.

I want to thank LULAC for participating in the development of the plan and suggesting concrete ideas.

Now is not the time or place to give a detailed talk about the Plan and the FCC's agenda. While my remarks tonight and the entire national broadband plan have been translated into Spanish, the more typical request for my policy statements is that they be translated into English.

But let me give you a high-level overview of what we're working on.

For starters, we're working hard to close the broadband adoption gap, pursuing initiatives like a Digital Literacy Corps.

I'll also note that in connection with the recently approved Comcast/NBC Universal merger, Comcast has committed to making high-speed internet available to approximately 2.5 million low-income households for less than \$10 a month.

Second, we're working to close the broadband deployment gap.

To connect the 24 million Americans couldn't even get broadband service if they wanted it, we're modernizing the Universal Service Fund. USF brought phone service to all corners of the country in the 20th century. We're fixing it so it can deliver broadband in the 21st.

Anchor institutions are a vital gateway to the Internet, so we're updating our E-Rate program, which connects schools and libraries, giving participants flexibility to open their facilities to their broader communities.

Third, we're working to unleash spectrum -- the invisible infrastructure that sustains our mobile networks.

Few areas hold greater promise for new innovations that will create jobs and improve our quality of life than mobile broadband. And mobile is now the primary gateway to the Internet for many Americans, especially low-income Americans. But demand for spectrum will soon outstrip the supply.

That's why we're pursuing a strong multi-part agenda to unleash more spectrum for broadband.

Finally, we're working to make sure small businesses can take advantages of the opportunities broadband offers.

The FCC is working with the Small Business Administration to create public/private partnerships to improve broadband education and training for small and diverse businesses.

We've also revitalized the FCC's Office of Communications Business Opportunities. The Office has held "speed dating" sessions to bring together entrepreneurs and capital, and is working to use technology to provide tools and information to small businesses on how to access capital.

I'd like to close with a brief story.

Last year, I went to the Bronx with Congressman Jose Serrano. We visited a center that trained area residents to use new technologies. At a meeting with a group of people who'd participated in their programs, I asked the group a question: "What does broadband mean to you?"

A man named Irvin Aviles stood up. Irvin said he had lost his job at age 47, and had no prospects for getting a new one. But then he got information technology training, and this training helped him get a job at Time Warner Cable.

He said that, to him, "Broadband means broad opportunity."

Opportunity.

That's what the FCC's work on broadband is all about. That's what LULAC's work is all about.

I look forward to working with LULAC to seize the opportunities of broadband and bring the benefits of high-speed Internet to all Americans.

Gracias and Buenos Noches.