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JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

JUDICIARY

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2011

0343

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

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

We write to you today about wireless broadband and data roaming practices. Wireless data services are becoming an increasingly important part of consumers' daily lives, yet many consumers suffer from a lack of adequate wireless coverage, particularly in rural areas. To ensure that *all* consumers have access to wireless broadband services, we urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to consider rules that ensure data roaming is provided on just and reasonable terms. This will help promote competition in the wireless industry and encourage investment in the build-out of wireless data systems.

By establishing clear rules on data roaming, the FCC can help provide certainty to both large and small wireless providers. As you know, small wireless carriers in rural areas are currently unwilling or unable to expand their infrastructure due to the unavailability of data roaming or the fluctuation in the price of data roaming charged by large carriers. Similarly, large carriers have little incentive to improve rural service so long as uncertainty exists about future data roaming requirements. This standoff shortchanges consumers and denies businesses an important communications tool.

That the FCC should consider clear rules for data roaming is bolstered by the success of its 2007 ruling on voice roaming. Under that rule -- which set-up a system for negotiating voice roaming rates -- carriers have been able to reach pro-consumer roaming agreements and exorbitant roaming charges have disappeared from phone bills. At the same time, smaller providers have been able to increase their investment in infrastructure and consumers have benefitted from more competition and better service. Now, as wireless data is quickly becoming a critical part of consumers' cell phone needs, the FCC needs to do the same for data roaming.

We urge the FCC to ensure consumers have access to seamless data coverage and to incentivize carrier investment and innovation in wireless network services. We look forward to working with you on this issue.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



John F. Kerry
United States Senator