

FCC CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
REMARKS AT COMCAST INTERNET ESSENTIALS EVENT

BALLOU HIGH SCHOOL - WASHINGTON, DC
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Thank you David for that introduction, and thank you Principal Branch for welcoming us to Ballou.

This past January, Comcast made a voluntary commitment to the FCC and to the American people to provide discounted broadband service to millions of low-income Americans.

Thanks to continued follow through, here we are – 9 months later – at the national launch of Comcast’s Internet Essentials program that aims to provide high-speed Internet to millions of households - and millions of children.

We know that the three biggest barriers to broadband adoption are cost, digital literacy, and relevance - that many Americans don’t see broadband as relevant to their lives.

The Internet Essentials program takes big steps to address these issues.

By helping to close the adoption gap, this program will prepare the next generation, create new opportunities for more jobs and economic growth, and will make a positive difference in the lives of many Americans.

Why is the Internet Essentials program important for low-income families and for our country?

Broadband is our central platform in this 21st century for economic growth, innovation, and information. Broadband can be 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.

But roughly 100 million Americans are being bypassed by the broadband revolution.

That's 68% of Americans who aren't connected at home.

Compare that to South Korea and Singapore where adoption rates top 90%.

Low-income Americans and minorities disproportionately find themselves on the wrong-side of this digital divide.

Earlier today, Connected Nation released a report looking at broadband adoption in disadvantaged communities. I’d like to commend them for shining a light on this issue.

They found that only 46 percent of low-income households with children have adopted broadband.

For minority low-income households, that number drops to 37 percent.

The digital divide is seriously troubling; more troubling now than in the past, because the costs of digital exclusion are rising.

Look at the role broadband is already playing in education.

Students increasingly need to go online to complete their homework assignments.

But one-third of all students and a majority of low-income children can't.

It's not because there aren't countless kids trying to do their very best. We heard about a high school girl in Florida who does her homework in the parking lot of the local library each night, because the library's wifi hot spot is the only way she can get online.

When roughly one-third of American kids are offline, it hurts all students.

It keeps teachers from assigning Internet-based homework if a significant percentage of their students don't have broadband at home.

Teaching to the lowest digital denominator doesn't work for our children or our country.

Take health care, as another example. If you suffer from diabetes or heart issues - even if you're a kid - remote monitoring technologies can save your life. But only if you have broadband.

Even if you don't have a chronic health condition, people increasingly rely on broadband to look up basic health information.

One cruel irony is that families that can't afford broadband miss out on thousands of dollars in consumer savings.

One study found that savvy consumers who are broadband subscribers can save more than \$7,000 a year from discounts available exclusively online.

Let's talk about jobs and our economy,

Almost all Fortune 500 companies post their openings only online. And they require online job applications – from Wal-Mart to Exxon Mobil.

In today's world, you need broadband to find a job and apply for a job.

Being connected at home not only allows you to search for jobs, it can also help you develop basic skills -- like how to upgrade and upload your resume online.

Every high school graduate in the US should be digitally literate, but we're not there.

And learning slightly more advanced digital skills can be your ticket to a new job.

Indeed.com is a company that aggregates online data about job listings. Its data offers evidence of a "skills gap" in the job market.

According to Indeed.com's data, there are 12 metropolitan areas in which the ratio of job postings to unemployed people is one-to-one. That's one job posting for every person looking for a job.

These jobs aren't getting filled because our labor pool doesn't have the right skills.

And while some jobs require engineering or extensive computer software expertise, many open basic require only basic digital skills – knowing how to use a computer, search, process a transaction.

Other jobs require skills or certifications that can be gotten online - like basic training for entry level positions in the health care industry, or being certified in the use of Microsoft Office.

I was recently in Indiana to announce the creation of 100,000 new jobs at customer service centers.

These workers aren't just talking on the phone any more. They are processing transactions; accessing records and information; emailing, live text chatting, and managing accounts.

These activities don't require advanced degrees, but they do require broadband and digital literacy.

I should note that many of those service center jobs will be at-home positions – jobs for people with disabilities who can't make it into an office, jobs for stay-at-home parents who need flexible schedules, jobs for veterans returning from war and transitioning back into the economy.

Adopting broadband can make your home a virtual office.

The Internet Essentials program will help ensure that more Americans enjoy the education, health and economic benefits of broadband.

I want to take this opportunity to applaud Comcast for their work on Digital Essentials.

And I also want to challenge other service providers and those across the broadband economy to step up and take concrete steps to promote broadband adoption.

Getting millions more Americans online is a win-win for consumers and for businesses.

More Americans will enjoy the benefits of broadband; and there will be more customers connected to our broadband economy.

I look forward to working with the private sector and nonprofit community to close the broadband adoption gap and expand the opportunities of broadband to more Americans.

It's now my pleasure to turn it over to the Chancellor of Washington DC's public schools, Kaya Henderson.

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