



# NEWS

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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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## **FCC OFFICE OF NATIVE AFFAIRS AND POLICY ISSUES REPORT ON 2012 ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND 2013 TRIBAL PRIORITIES**

### ***Efforts Include a Renewed Regulatory Agenda and Commitment to Consultation, Engagement, and Training***

**Washington, D.C.** – The Federal Communications Commission’s Office of Native Affairs and Policy (ONAP) today released its 2012 report, detailing the Commission’s engagement with more than 400 Tribal Nations and travel to 42 federal Indian Reservations since the Office’s inception in the summer of 2010.

ONAP’s work with Tribes is focused on bringing modern communications infrastructure and the resulting benefits to Tribal Nations and Native communities throughout the United States. ONAP is responsible for developing and driving a Commission-wide Tribal agenda and ensuring Tribal voices are taken into account in Commission proceedings.

Geoffrey C. Blackwell, Chief of ONAP, outlined several Commission accomplishments with respect to Tribal Nations in a presentation to FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski and the other Commissioners at the agency’s regular Open Meeting on March 20. Blackwell spoke of the important exercise of the government-to-government relationship that the Commission shares with Tribal Nations through agency consultation and coordination on the ground with Tribal leaders in Indian Country. His presentation summarized highlights from ONAP’s 2012 Annual Report, as well as several case studies of Tribal Nations with whom the Commission is working. The ONAP 2012 Report is available at <http://www.fcc.gov/topic/native-nations>.

"Today's report exemplifies how the FCC is making strides to expand communications services for Native Americans to harness new technologies and improve economic development, education and access to health care," said Sen. Tom Udall, D-N.M., who attended Wednesday’s FCC meeting and is a member of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs. “I want to thank Chairman Genachowski, the Commission and Geoff Blackwell for their commitment to ensuring the first Americans receive the services their communities desperately need and I look forward to working together to continue building on these important efforts.”

ONAP was created by unanimous Commission vote in July 2010 in response to a recommendation in the FCC’s *National Broadband Plan*, which recognized that the lack of basic and advanced communications services on Tribal lands leaves Tribal members with less access to telecommunications services than any other segment of the population.

To foster and assist the FCC's work with Indian Country, ONAP coordinated closely in 2012 with the FCC-Native Nations Broadband Task Force, which is comprised of elected and appointed Tribal government officials from across the nation and senior managers from across the FCC. In 2012, the Task Force met on several occasions and several of the group's members helped ONAP in coordinating its regional consultations and training seminars.

Significant accomplishments, the report states, "are reflected in the Commission's new rules, proposed rules, and new policies with respect to Tribal Nations. These indicators of success include new levels of dialogue and reporting, new licensing priority opportunities, and increased support and investment through universal service support mechanisms." ONAP's presentation covered multiple issue areas related to the deployment of services on Tribal lands, each of which is highlighted by a case study in the report.

ONAP, in coordination with other FCC Bureaus and Offices, also conducted six training sessions on or near Tribal lands in 2012. Commission representatives visited Tribal Nations and locations in Alaska, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, Maine, and Louisiana, among others, for the first time. The Commission's Tribal consultation and coordination priorities in 2013 include work with Tribes and carriers on the Tribal Mobility Fund and Mobility Fund Phase II, offering assistance with the new Tribal government engagement obligation under the Connect America Fund rules, and continuing training and outreach efforts.

The ONAP report discusses the progress that the Commission has made in closing the digital divide in Indian Country, and spells out how that progress will continue in the years to come, through the consultation efforts of the entire agency and the involvement and contributions of staff and managers of the Bureaus and Offices across the Commission.

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