

**FCC ACTING CHAIRWOMAN MIGNON CLYBURN
PREPARED REMARKS AT
NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE WASHINGTON/URBAN SOLUTIONS FORUM
“ADVANCING A BROADBAND AGENDA FOR URBAN AMERICA”
OCTOBER 30, 2013**

Good afternoon. It's always a pleasure to be with the Urban League, and share the stage with my good friend Marc Morial. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in today's Urban Ideas Forum and I would like to thank Ms. Ashby for the opportunity.

The last time I joined you I believe was at your annual conference in Philadelphia. And with the cuts due to sequestration and a trimmed travel budget I really do appreciate you for keeping it local.

As always I want to thank the Urban League for its outstanding leadership and partnership with the FCC as an ally in our efforts to expand opportunity through communications technology.

You asked me to speak about the FCC's efforts to maximize the benefits of high-speed Internet for all Americans, which is quite convenient since that's the agency's number one priority.

So why is advancing a broadband agenda so vital to America?

As the FCC's National Broadband Plan stated in its opening paragraph, "Broadband is a foundation for economic growth, job creation, and global competitiveness and a better way of life. It is enabling new industries and unlocking vast new possibilities for existing ones."

Just this week an interesting report came out that attempted to quantify the benefits of broadband for an average American. The analysis looked at the cost savings to a typical U.S. consumer who goes online to purchase goods and services like entertainment, travel, and clothing in addition to the savings associated with the ability to research purchases online. Their conclusion: Having access to broadband saves the average consumer \$9,300 every year. That's: \$9,300 every year and that's just cost savings.

Obviously broadband delivers value in many other ways like jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Just over a year ago I joined with Marc Morial here in Washington, for the release of an Urban League report "Connecting the Dots: Linking Broadband Adoption to Job Creation and Job Competitiveness."

The report showed a direct link, between access to broadband and access to jobs. For example, according to the report, 77% of African Americans have used broadband to search for jobs.

The report also contained examples of how Urban League Job Training Centers in places like Central Florida were helping people find jobs through digital skills training.

While “Connecting the Dots” made clear that broadband adoption is critical for full participation in today’s economy it also found that we’ve made progress toward the goal of connecting all Americans to the digital age and these job opportunities.

Since 2008 broadband adoption has risen from about 60% to around 70%, and the adoption gap between whites and African Americans has been nearly cut in half, since 2009.

But the report also made clear that too many Americans still find themselves being left behind by the broadband revolution. Roughly one-third of American families still haven’t adopted high-speed Internet at home – that’s about 100 million people.

And certain populations find themselves disproportionately on the wrong side of the digital divide.

Only 43% of the elderly, 54% of persons earning less than \$30,000 a year, 53% of Latinos, and 64% of African Americans have adopted fixed broadband service at home.

And there are 15 million Americans who live in areas that don’t even have access to fixed broadband networks, because there is no business case for rapid deployment.

Broadband is no longer a luxury, it is essential in today’s society in finding a job, getting an education, receiving quality health care, and staying connected, with family and community.

That’s why the FCC was proud to partner with the Urban League in kick-starting Connect2Compete, the most comprehensive public-private partnership ever, to close the broadband adoption gap. Connect2Compete is tackling each of the barriers to adoption – affordability, digital literacy, and the fact that some non-adopters don’t think broadband is relevant to their lives.

I’m proud, after years of good-faith attempts which fell short, that a bipartisan Commission was finally able to come together and modernize our universal service programs for the Internet age.

We’ve taken the outdated, inefficient Universal Service Fund and transformed it into the new Connect America Fund which has made significant new funding available by matching hundreds of millions of private sector dollars to quickly expand broadband infrastructure to rural communities in every region of the nation.

Another key universal service initiative is our E-Rate program. Created in the late 1990s, E-Rate helps schools and libraries obtain affordable telecommunications services, broadband Internet access, and internal network connections.

As educators across the country integrate digital content into their lesson plans, faster speeds and additional capacity are needed to accommodate all of the interactive educational uses and promises of digital learning.

In fact, in a 2010 FCC survey of schools and libraries, nearly half of the responses reported lower Internet connectivity speeds than the average American home.

We must do better to ensure that students, teachers, and the millions of citizens who use libraries each year have access to the tools they need to compete and succeed in the digital age.

President Obama challenged the FCC to bring high-speed Internet to 99% of U.S. students within five years and we are answering his call.

This summer we kicked off our efforts to modernize E-rate to achieve greater connectivity across schools and libraries with affordable access to broadband speeds. In particular we've identified three proposed goals to modernize the E-rate program:

- (1) ensuring schools and libraries have affordable access to high-capacity broadband;
- (2) promoting cost-effective purchasing; and
- (3) streamlining our program administration.

As we move forward this effort will require coordination across communities and from multiple stakeholders and I am confident that together we can modernize E-rate to achieve these goals.

The FCC is also moving to close the adoption gap by reforming the Lifeline program, which has significantly increased the overall penetration rate for basic phone service in this nation.

I believe that the Lifeline program can do the same for *broadband* service affordability that it has done for telephone service affordability.

That is why I supported our reforms which were adopted last year that made addressing broadband affordability a stated goal of the Lifeline program. The Commission is conducting pilot projects to determine the best way to address the digital divide for low-income consumers in the Lifeline program.

Consumer groups and civil and human rights organizations can help ensure that the Lifeline Program remains a viable low-income consumer program. Informing your constituents about the benefits and importance of Lifeline, as well as the eligibility requirements and how to properly enroll, will go a long way toward making sure those who are eligible for Lifeline receive it.

Let me close by saying that the challenges of closing the digital divide are too great for any one person, or organization to solve. That's true of each level of government, whether it's federal, state, or local. That's true of the private sector. And that's true of nonprofits like the

Urban League. That's why increased public-private sector collaboration is so important, and that's why I look forward to maintaining and expanding this fine partnership, which will best ensure, that all Americans have access, to reliable and affordable broadband.

Thank you.