

**Broadband and Employment: African Americans'
Use of the Internet in Job Search**

**Opening Remarks - Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
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The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies

Good morning. It's always a pleasure to join the Joint Center and share the stage with my dear friend and fellow South Carolinian, Ralph Everett. I wish to thank the Joint Center for not only hosting today's panel discussion but for publishing the [Broadband and Jobs](#) study.

One of our number one priorities at the FCC is to maximize the benefits of broadband for all and as the FCC's National Broadband Plan stated in its opening paragraph, "Broadband is a foundation for economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness and a better way of life."

This enabler of new technologies, industries and incredible new possibilities is no longer a luxury; it is a necessity. Broadband is essential to getting an education, receiving quality health care, and staying connected with family and community. And as today's report affirms, broadband is increasingly essential to find a job, especially for communities of color.

What caught my attention is that 50% of African Americans deemed the Internet as “very important” in helping them successfully finding a job, compared to 36% for the rest of the sample population.

71% of African-Americans found that being without a smartphone was a disadvantage during a job search, compared to 34% of the rest of the sample.

And although African-Americans lag in broadband adoption at home, access to the Internet is comparable to Whites when you factor in smartphones.

What this report helps make clear is that people need access to broadband to be full participants in the global economy. Broadband connectivity is critical to economic opportunity and has a cascading effect, because Internet access helps one become digitally literate. Being digitally literate means a person can leverage the Internet to find a job, but being digitally literate also means, that a person can leverage the Internet to harness all the benefits from our digital economy.

So what is the FCC doing to connect more Americans to broadband?

I'm proud that after years of good-faith attempts fell short, a bipartisan FCC 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We've taken the outdated, inefficient Universal Service Fund, and transformed it into the new Connect America Fund, which has made significant new funding available to quickly expand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. 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 multiple stakeholders and I am confident that together, we can modernize E-rate to achieve these goals.

We've also been hard at work to do our part to ensure that broadband is affordable. 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 the FCC's 2012 Lifeline reforms, which 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.

I wish to once again thank the Joint Center for being an invaluable partner in this effort to connect all Americans. Today's report sheds new light on the path forward which convinces me that by working together, we will indeed realize the promise of broadband for all Americans.

Thank you.