

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN**

Re: *A National Broadband Plan for Our Future*, GN Docket No. 09-51

Today we launch a long overdue, desperately needed effort to establish a national broadband policy. This is a step Chairman Copps and I have advocated for many years. It is wonderful to see it finally come to fruition under your Chairmanship. As we finally undertake this inquiry, it is to implement a historic piece of legislation. While it should not have taken an act of Congress to get us to do our jobs, the fact that Congress acted gives us the funding to do it right, and provides us the mandate to draft an authoritative plan.

I want to thank Chairman Copps for his leadership in bringing an excellent and comprehensive item to us so quickly. At this critical time in our nation's history, this far-reaching NOI asks the right questions. It seeks input from all stakeholders as to how we can design a broadband plan that brings the promise of technology to everyone. For those of us who have long hungered for a meaty discussion of how to craft a national broadband plan, today we set the table for a feast.

Broadband is no longer a luxury. It is essential if we are going to maximize the potential of every citizen to contribute to our social, cultural and economic life. We need the full input of every citizen, whether they live in rural, insular or other high-cost areas, whether they live in economically challenged sections of our inner cities, whether they are persons with disabilities, whether or not they speak English, and regardless of their income level. We need everyone's voice to create a truly national plan that leaves nobody out.

To make our plan more than just words, we must start by upgrading our communications infrastructure in every corner of this country. And we must do a better job of making innovative communications technologies more widely available and affordable. It's clearly in our economic interests to do so, especially given the downturn we face; but it is also in the interests of our health care system, our environment, our education system, our energy grid, our transportation network, our public safety agencies – in fact, broadband will help us address almost every big challenge we face. Other countries around the world have long recognized this. At long last, we have a President, a Congress and a FCC that do, as well.

To address our communications needs, we'll need to rededicate ourselves to the tall tasks of expanding access to broadband services and modernizing universal service. We will harness the talents of everyone in this country to maximize our economic growth, improve our quality of life, and uplift our democracy and the values we hold dear.

To be clear, we are not substituting Government policy for market discipline. Any successful broadband strategy will rely primarily and extensively on the private sector to drive deployment and investment. We need to encourage capital investment, and find ways to facilitate access to the capital markets in these challenging times. A true public-private partnership will require far greater focus from our policy leaders to succeed. We need all players to work together.

On the government side, to reach its full impact, any strategy will need to involve proper coordination across all levels of government. On a Federal level, it will require unprecedented interagency coordination, which we are already seeing on a scale that dwarfs any efforts in the previous Administration. Given the cross-cutting impact of broadband, this will involve far more

agencies than just the ones we usually associate with telecommunications, such as the FCC, NTIA and RUS. A major role is needed by numerous departments including Health and Human Services, Education, Energy, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Justice, Homeland Security, Defense, the Small Business Administration, and the Federal Trade Commission, to name a few. This will require coordination at the White House level. And the Federal government will need to coordinate with efforts by our partners in state, local and tribal governments.

And of course we recognize that any effective effort will rely heavily on wireless broadband as the wave of the future, and a key element to reach hard to serve areas. Considering America's ever-increasing appetite for reliable broadband services and applications from mobile devices, the role that wireless will play is huge and undeniable. There is a clear need for focused efforts on spectrum efficiency and management, which will require a thorough spectrum inventory, as many in Congress are now proposing. The future success of our economy demands that we promote the expansion of communications infrastructure and focus our energies on optimizing our spectrum resources.

A key part of any meaningful broadband plan must be accurate, reliable and detailed data on broadband deployment. I am pleased that today's item, among many other important questions, asks how we can build on our current data collection methods to determine who is participating in the broadband revolution, and who is not, including those in tribal lands and rural areas. It is only with these data – which we should have been collecting all along – that we can make sound policy decisions. Today's NOI reminds us that we have also been charged by Congress to develop a comprehensive *rural* broadband strategy under the 2008 Farm Bill with our partners at the Department of Agriculture. I look forward to working with my colleagues on that important plan, which is due to Congress next month.

Broadband is now the critical infrastructure of our economy and our democracy. In the last decade, we have seen the doors of civic participation and economic opportunity blown open by the power of the Internet. And not one of our citizens should be left out. But let's be clear, this won't happen overnight. It will take contributions from every sector – private, public, non-profit and in partnership. Yet it is reassuring to finally have leadership at every level of the Federal government that truly understands the importance of these digital connections. This Notice recognizes the need to pursue a comprehensive strategy that involves improving broadband deployment, availability, affordability, adoption, competition, and cyber security.

Finally, I want to thank the hard-working staff for a true cross-bureau effort in drafting what is one of the most significant items we have seen. With your hard work, today's NOI sets us on the right path to fulfill Congress' intent to bring broadband opportunities to those who need it most, when they need it most.