

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI**

Re: *Policies to Promote Rural Radio Service and to Streamline Allotment and Assignment Procedures (MB Docket No.09-52); Improving Communications Services for Native Nations by Promoting Greater Utilization of Spectrum over Tribal Lands (WT Docket No. 11-40); Improving Communications Services for Native Nations (CG Docket No. 11-41)*

As we developed the National Broadband Plan last year, we asked Americans to share with us their concerns if broadband wasn't available where they lived. And a woman named Sara from White Swan, Washington wrote us back. She told us:

With [b]roadband made available here in the rural areas of the Yakama Indian Reservation it would help us out a[]lot. My [s]ister and I are disabled and do not drive much. . . . Faster internet would help with education needs in our home. . . .

The phone co[mpany] keeps telling us [“]soon[”] for broadband[. W]e have seen them upgrade the lines right in front of our home, but [are] still waiting for some type of upgrades to come in to the substation to allow people further out access to broadband.

Our job here at the Commission is to help turn “soon” into “today.” Because communications services like broadband, wireless communications and radio aren't just valuable as means to deliver entertainment and diversions. They are vital platforms for community-building, cultural preservation, and the promotion of public health, education and economic opportunity in Native Nations.

Native Nations' unique circumstances vary widely – from reservations along the Eastern Seaboard, to Alaska Villages, to the Home Lands of Native Hawaiians – but we also know that many of you share similar visions for how broadband can improve the daily lives of Native Americans. Today's items are about ways to help the leaders of Native Nations achieve those visions for their own communities.

Our first item will help Native Nations preserve their culture, language, and community values by making it easier to deploy rural radio service. This will particularly help Native Nations with small or irregularly shaped lands and non-landed Native Nations provide their citizens with programming that meets their needs and interests.

Our second item, the Spectrum over Tribal Lands NPRM, will create new opportunities for Native Nations to gain access to spectrum and create new incentives for licensees to deploy wireless services on Tribal Lands. We know that there have been lives lost in Native America because of the lack of basic communications services. We know that in the cold of a recent winter, when a car broke down on a reservation in the North Plains and a signal was not available, two young Indian men froze to death. We know that not too long ago in Arizona Indian Country, when a father and family man had a heart attack, his family had too far to travel just to reach a telephone. When emergency services finally arrived, it was too late.

But we *also* know that wireless availability can help bridge these gaps and even save lives. Wireless can make it easier to manage chronic diseases that plague places like Indian Country in Southern Arizona, where over one-third of American Indians over 20 have been diagnosed with diabetes. And so I am hopeful that this item will not just help more people in

Native Nations obtain access to wireless, but also in some small way help communities tackle the public health challenges they face today.

And our third item, a Notice of Inquiry on Improving Communications Services for Native Nations, will lay the groundwork for policies that can help Native Nations build economic and educational opportunity for their members on their own sovereign lands. I've said on many occasions that broadband is indispensable infrastructure for economic growth and job creation. And nowhere is that need more acutely felt than on Tribal lands. The lack of robust broadband services contributes to the challenges each of you face in building strong economies with diverse businesses and development projects. So we seek comment on the best ways to support sustainable broadband deployment, adoption, and digital literacy training on Tribal lands.

Among other important questions, we also ask about opportunities to use communications services to help Native Nations address public safety challenges on Tribal lands, including the broad lack of 911 and E-911 services, and the needs of persons with disabilities. We consider how barriers to entry might be preventing the deployment of satellite services in the most remote parts of Native Nations. And we also begin a new inquiry into the status of Hawaiian Home Lands.

In all these efforts, we look forward to working directly with you and finding the right answers to complex problems, to ensure that our actions are wisely taken and lead to effective solutions in your communities. Because as I said to many of you a year ago at the same NCAI winter conference that many of you have just attended, an important and unique trust relationship exists between the Commission and Native Nations. And that trust relationship has borne fruit today. Several of the items we adopt today grow largely out of ideas and proposals advocated by the Native community, and begin to break down barriers for Native Nations and their governmental entities to enter the communications field themselves. These actions recognize the important role that Native Nations play in planning and delivering services and the genuine potential of Tribal or Native-centric approaches to developing successful service models.

We are committed to honoring your sovereignty and self-determination, and strengthening our nation-to-nation relationships. In that spirit, later today, the Office of Native Affairs and Policy and our Bureaus will be hosting a separate session to engage in a dialogue and listening session with our guests from Native Nations on these items. And because we place a high value on your input and consultative guidance, I am pleased to announce today another action to help us work better together: the establishment of an FCC-Native Nations Broadband Task Force, as recommended by the National Broadband Plan, comprised of leaders from across the Native Nations and senior staff from across the Commission. This Task Force, co-chaired by Geoff Blackwell and a co-chair elected from among the 19 Native Nations representatives on the Task Force, will be a permanent mechanism for this Commission and sovereign Native Nations to work together on a positive policy agenda for communications in Native America.

Thank you again to our honorable guests for coming to the Commission today. Like my colleagues, I look forward to coming to your Nations in person soon, and hope that you will find our afternoon discussions informative and productive.