

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

Re: *Inquiry Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability to All Americans in a Reasonable and Timely Fashion, and Possible Steps to Accelerate Such Deployment Pursuant to Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, as Amended by the Broadband Data Improvement Act*, GN Docket No. 10-159, Seventh Broadband Progress Report and Order on Reconsideration

Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 contemplates that broadband service should be available to *all* Americans in a reasonable and timely fashion. Today, we find that despite the efforts of both the private and public sectors to promote broadband availability for over a decade, as many as 26 million Americans do not have access to a broadband-capable network at home. We do so using a new data set available to us—the National Broadband Map—in addition to broadband subscribership data the Commission collects. While the Map is far from perfect, this is the first time the Commission has had available to it actual deployment information. I believe this is far better than relying *only* upon subscribership data and is a significant improvement from previous *Broadband Progress Reports*. Congress should be commended for recognizing the importance of such information to our nation and for its allocation of funding to ensure that the Map would be publicly available to the benefit of many, including consumers, industry, and policymakers.

It is evident that the Commission's efforts to promote broadband deployment to unserved areas continue to be a necessary and crucial endeavor. To date, we have addressed some barriers to deployment, as recommended by the National Broadband Plan, but there is much work to do. Our reform of the Universal Service Fund (USF) and the intercarrier compensation system (ICC) must be realized to ensure that those areas currently unserved do not remain that way. I was especially pleased that in February, we unanimously approved a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, to reform and modernize the USF and ICC. In March, the Commission reiterated its commitment to that goal, stating “[w]e must eliminate waste and inefficiency and modernize USF and ICC to bring the benefits of broadband to all Americans. We can’t afford to delay.”<sup>1</sup> Indeed, every American without access to a broadband network, who wants to be connected, cannot afford *any* delay. As more services, products, and information migrate on-line, those Americans who cannot access them are at a significant disadvantage. This important fact was clearly illustrated by one consumer’s personal testimony at our third workshop on USF/ICC reform in Omaha, Nebraska this week, who had moved from one suburb to another and had the unfortunate discovery that her new home was not served by high-speed Internet. She no longer could use all of the features and functions on the World Wide Web from home. This was not just a mere inconvenience for her and her family. It has completely altered her ability to conduct personal business in an efficient and effective manner. Accordingly, it is incumbent upon this Commission to address USF/ICC reform in a reasonable and timely fashion to ensure that consumers gain access to broadband no matter where they live, and I look forward to us completing our work within a few months after our record is complete in late May<sup>2</sup> so that we can provide for the availability of broadband throughout the nation.

I wholeheartedly agree with the *Report* that our assessment of broadband availability must include a review of our nation’s adoption of broadband. Where a broadband-capable network is deployed, but cannot be accessed by some consumers due to, say, the cost of service or equipment—then

---

<sup>1</sup> FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski and FCC Commissioners Michael Copps, Robert McDowell, Mignon Clyburn, and Meredith Baker, “Making Universal Service and Intercarrier Compensation Reform Happen,” (March 15, 2011), available at <http://blog.broadband.gov/?entryId=1335554> (last visited May 19, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> *See id.*

it is not truly *available* to those consumers. The significant investments made by both the public and private sectors to provide universal availability of broadband networks will be futile, if we do not address the barriers to broadband adoption. Too many Americans are being left behind—caught in a digital divide, and the statistics are sobering. Nearly 80 million American adults have not subscribed to broadband at home. Moreover, adoption of broadband is lower than the national average for minorities, low-income consumers, and residents of rural areas. In fact, cost is the most cited reason for those Americans who have not subscribed. I am concerned that these Americans cannot fully participate in our society and economy, and that they will have limited access to health care, educational, and employment opportunities that are essential for improving their lives and their children's futures. It is absolutely critical that the Commission address these issues in a reasonable and timely fashion.

I am hopeful that the efforts undertaken by industry, such as the Comcast Broadband Opportunity Program and CenturyLink's Broadband Adoption Program, will help address the cost and digital literacy barriers for some consumers. But we cannot rely solely on industry efforts. It is crucial for us to do our part and complete our review of the Lifeline program, provide the flexibility for consumers to use their subsidy to purchase bundled voice and broadband service, and implement a pilot project that offers discounted broadband service to low-income consumers.

I have not wavered from my commitment to do my part in addressing the issues before us as expeditiously as possible, so we can have an America where every citizen has access to and has capacity to adopt broadband.