

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4402

May 28, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I would like to share my thoughts on the National Broadband Plan (NBP) and its potential implications for rural America. I fully support the goal of the NBP in ensuring that every American has affordable access to robust broadband service. Key to reaching this goal is reforming the universal service fund to focus on broadband deployment. As you craft the policies that will achieve these goals, I urge you to keep in mind the impact of your current proposal on rural America.

In particular, I am concerned that some of the proposals in the NBP have the potential to set the United States on a course toward a greater digital divide between urban and rural areas. For example, while trumpeting the benefits of broadband at 100 megabits per second (Mbps) for 100 million homes, the NBP also moves to transition the universal service fund to support broadband offerings at 4 Mbps. The practical impact is two very different goals for rural regions and more densely populated areas. Establishing such a low threshold for rural residents and businesses has the potential to hinder their ability to share in the transformative vision for broadband outlined in the NBP. Further, it could impair the ability of telecommunications carriers to make investments necessary to deploy broadband services in our most rural areas.

Rural Americans and businesses are understandably concerned about the impact of the proposals in the National Broadband Plan on their ability to receive comparable and affordable broadband service. I ask you to seriously consider these concerns as you implement the plan's recommendations and take the appropriate steps to ensure all Americans play a role in, and benefit from, the promise of broadband.

Sincerely,


JIM MATHESON
Member of Congress