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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2504

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

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

Let me take this opportunity to express my gratitude for recently unveiling the National Broadband Plan (NBP) and also to share with you some thoughts regarding broadband Internet access in rural Missouri.

As the first of its kind, the NBP is both thoughtful and well-intended. However, in recent weeks, I have heard from rural telecommunications providers, small business owners, and residents of Missouri's Fourth Congressional District concerning proposals in the plan that might further widen the "digital divide."

Folks back home in Missouri are aware, as are you and I, that access to broadband Internet in urban and suburban areas has dramatically outpaced rural broadband deployment. Understanding the reason for this requires only a simple study of supply and demand economics. Simply put, when it comes to providing quality, affordable broadband Internet, rural companies are at a distinct disadvantage due to the geographic hurdles that are inherent in servicing rural communities.

While the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has made important strides to provide affordable broadband Internet access to unserved and underserved communities, it is important that future broadband policies do not discriminate against Americans simply based upon where they live. Technology is said to be a great equalizer and in order for residents in my District to truly be competitive and able to participate in our global economy, high-performance broadband Internet access is essential.

As you may know, rural America is home to over 50 million Americans. And, as I see it, this represents over 50 million opportunities to guide our nation back toward economic prosperity. Rural America can provide our nation's next generation of pioneers in math, science, health care, and technological innovation. However, we leave them at a certain disadvantage if we fail to provide competitive access to information and the marketplace.

As the Federal Communications Commission and the Congress debate telecommunications policy in the days ahead, I ask for your cooperation in seeking solutions to the unique problems in rural America and that you work to diminish the gap between those who have access to the latest technologies in our country and those who do not. Let us not miss the 50 million opportunities that rural America can provide.

Again, thank you for your work on this most important issue. With kind regards, I remain

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ike Skelton', written over a horizontal line.

IKE SKELTON
Member of Congress

IS: ek

cc: Commissioners Copps, McDowell, Clyburn, and Baker