



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE Contact: Eric Keber (202-548-0202, eric@w-t-a.org)

WTA Praises RUS Administrator Adelstein's Letter to FCC Chairman Genachowski in Response to National Broadband Plan

Helena, MT (November 10, 2010) – The Western Telecommunications Alliance (WTA) thanks Rural Utilities Service (RUS) Administrator Jonathan Adelstein for his letter to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Julius Genachowski. The letter clearly articulates the steps that need to be taken if the proposed National Broadband Plan is to fulfill its promise of providing incentives for deployment of a ubiquitous broadband network across America.

Specifically, WTA commends the Administrator for highlighting the importance of broadband to rural communities and the vital role the existing Universal Service Fund has played in bringing broadband to those communities. The letter states, in part:

“[The existing Universal Service Fund and intercarrier compensation system], often combined with affordable lending from RUS, have made otherwise high-cost rural areas more attractive and less expensive to serve, both for initial construction and for continuous upgrades, giving many rural consumers access to the latest telecommunications technology by supporting continuous improvements in service quality... This could not have been accomplished without such mechanisms to support rural areas that are higher cost due to lack of density.”

“WTA supports reforming the current system to adapt to the broadband world, but the National Broadband Plan, as currently proposed, puts the current USF and intercarrier compensation revenue stream in jeopardy for our members,” said Kelly Worthington, WTA's Executive Vice-President. “Without a viable and predictable USF system geared toward providing and maintaining broadband deployment, our members will not be able to maintain and upgrade their networks.”

WTA supports a collaborative effort between the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Office of Rural Development, RUS and the FCC to ensure that sound public policy is developed that enables companies to meet consumers' needs.

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Western Telecommunications Alliance represents over 250 rural telecommunications companies providing quality voice, data and video services in rural areas in the 24 states west of the Mississippi River. On average, WTA member companies serve fewer than 3,000 access lines with fewer than 500 customers in each exchange. WTA's members serve some of the most rural and hard-to-serve communities in the country and are on the forefront of bringing 21st Century telecommunications services to rural America. For more information about WTA visit www.w-t-a.org.