



**For Immediate Release**

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**Rural Telecom Associations Reaffirm Commitment to Working with the FCC and Other Stakeholders on Universal Service and Intercarrier Compensation Reform to Ensure Consumers Everywhere Have Sustainable Access to Broadband**

October 6, 2011 (Washington, DC) – Today, the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA), the Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies (OPASTCO) and the Western Telecommunications Alliance (WTA) reaffirmed their commitment to working with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and other stakeholders on universal service and intercarrier compensation reform, so that consumers everywhere will have sustainable access to the robust broadband infrastructure that drives our nation’s ability to compete in the global economy, innovate, educate, and create jobs for millions of Americans. The associations released a joint statement following today’s speech by FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski on the FCC’s proposal for historic reforms to be voted on during the Commission’s open meeting later this month.

“The Chairman’s visit to Diller, Nebraska, earlier this year illustrated how important a sustainable and robust broadband infrastructure is to rural businesses and residents.” NTCA CEO Shirley Bloomfield stated. “As this long-running process draws to a likely close in the coming weeks, we will continue to press for common-sense reforms that recognize the unique challenges faced by small carriers and the consumers they serve in rural areas across the country.”

“Rural carriers have a long history of commitment to serving their customers and rural communities, and providing these services efficiently and with full accountability,” OPASTCO President John Rose stated. “Universal service and intercarrier compensation reform must ensure that these very customers are served not only by overarching, widely agreed upon principles, but by the details of a reform plan that recognizes the crucial role existing rural broadband networks play in local economies, education and health care.”

“A robust broadband network that meets the growing needs of consumers is a goal that all Americans, no matter where they live, should be able to enjoy,” WTA Executive Director Kelly Worthington stated. “We look forward to seeing the details of the Chairman’s proposals. Only then will we be able to determine whether rural networks will be strengthened by the reforms.”

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*The **National Telecommunications Cooperative Association** is the premier association representing more than 570 locally owned and controlled telecommunications cooperatives and commercial companies throughout rural and small-town America. NTCA provides its members with legislative, regulatory and industry representation; meetings; publications; and educational programs; and an array of employee benefit programs. Visit us at [www.ntca.org](http://www.ntca.org).*

*The **Organization for the Promotion and Advancement of Small Telecommunications Companies** (OPASTCO) is the leading voice for rural telecommunications, representing approximately 460 small incumbent local exchange carriers serving rural areas of the United States. Its members include both commercial companies and cooperatives, which collectively serve more than 3 million customers. OPASTCO represents rural telecommunications interests before federal regulatory bodies and Congress, provides publications, and holds two conventions annually in January and July of each year, addressing the needs of the small telecommunications industry. The association has an affiliate 501(c)(3) nonprofit the foundation for Rural Education and Development (FRED). Visit us at [www.opastco.org](http://www.opastco.org).*

***Western Telecommunications Alliance** (WTA) is a trade association whose membership is comprised of approximately 250 rural telecommunications carriers providing high-quality, voice, video and data services throughout 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. Visit us at [www.w-t-a.org](http://www.w-t-a.org).*