

May 28, 2009

The Honorable Michael J. Copps  
Acting Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 Twelfth Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: A National Broadband Plan for Our Future, GN Docket No. 09-51

Dear Acting Chairman Copps:

Demonstrated by the recent series of workshops providing Americans in unserved and underserved areas with the tools and skills to apply for broadband deployment grants, the National Black Chamber of Commerce (NBCC) is committed to promoting nationwide access to high-speed broadband Internet service. The mission of the NBCC is to empower and sustain African American communities through entrepreneurship and capitalistic activity. In the 21st century, that cannot be accomplished without giving those communities full access to broadband technology. The NBCC firmly believes that broadband service is essential to the success of small minority businesses in both local markets and the modern global economy.

Because of this, NBCC appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on your inquiry into the establishment of a National Broadband Plan.

The core constituents of the NBCC – small businesses in African American communities – benefit greatly from broadband access. Government policies that ensure the availability of broadband and encourage its adoption will have a profound effect on the economic health and availability of jobs within minority communities throughout the United States.

Right now, too many minorities are without the broadband service they need. A 2008 Pew Research Center study found that only 43 percent of African-American households had broadband, compared to 55 percent of the overall adult U.S. population. This has

undoubtedly contributed to an African American unemployment rate that currently stands at 13.3 percent, almost a full five points higher than the national average.

An intelligently crafted, pro-business National Broadband Plan will revitalize depressed rural and urban areas. It must address the special needs of not only minorities but also seniors, young people and the physically challenged.

To accomplish its mission, the National Broadband Plan must contain a comprehensive mapping strategy that identifies all communities without adequate broadband access. It should recommend government policies that will not only accelerate broadband deployment but also encourage its adoption.

The National Broadband Plan must also advocate for sensible federal regulatory policies that do not overburden broadband providers and users with unnecessary rules, restrictions and constraints. The enforcement of overly intrusive policies such as network neutrality will smother innovation and discourage the private investment so vital to continued growth.

We applaud the FCC for embarking on the creation of a National Broadband Strategy and stand ready to work with you to make this project successful.

Sincerely,

Harry C. Alford  
President/CEO