

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
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June 10, 2009

The Honorable Michael J. Copps
Acting Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Copps:

In May 2007, the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a survey of all actions undertaken by the federal government to encourage broadband deployment. The intent of the request was to ensure that government resources were being utilized efficiently to promote access to broadband, an effort critical to economic growth and educational opportunities throughout the United States.

Since that original request, the economy has undergone dramatic changes. In response to this economic crisis, Congress passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which created a new program to fund broadband grants and loans, provided funds for broadband mapping, and required the Federal Communications Commission to develop a national broadband plan.¹ The Energy and Commerce Committee has a keen interest in the success of these broadband-focused efforts, and we look forward to working with the Commission towards these goals.

We are writing to bring to your attention the final results of GAO's report, which will be released today. Key findings include the following:

- Although broadband infrastructure has been deployed extensively throughout the United States, gaps remain, primarily in rural areas, because of limited profit potential.
- Eleven federal programs help fund telecommunications infrastructure deployment, particularly in rural areas, and two of these programs, administered by the Department of

¹ Pub. L. No. 111-5 (2009).

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Agriculture's Rural Development Utilities Program, focus specifically on broadband infrastructure deployment.

- Although the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding will greatly increase the potential for achieving universal broadband access, overlap in responsibilities for these new broadband initiatives makes coordination among the agencies important to avoid fragmentation and duplication.
- Several countries with higher broadband penetration rates than the United States have written broadband policies, action plans, goals, and performance measures. A number of these other countries have provided financial support, created financial incentives, or taken other steps to promote broadband.²

GAO ultimately recommends that the Commission work with the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce to "specify performance goals and measures for broadband deployment and to define the departments' roles and responsibilities in carrying out the plan."³

We hope this report will prove valuable to the Commission as it moves forward with its work on national broadband policy matters. If you have any questions about the enclosed report or wish to speak with GAO directly, please have a member of your staff contact Roger Sherman on the Committee staff at (202) 225-2927.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Chairman



Rick Boucher
Chairman
Subcommittee on Communications,
Technology, and the Internet



Zack Space
Subcommittee on Communications,
Technology, and the Internet

² Government Accountability Office, *Broadband Deployment Plan Should Include Performance Goals and Measures to Guide Federal Investment* (May 2009) (GAO-09-494).

³ *Id.*