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### Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce

### Oversight of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: Broadband, Part 2 September 10, 2009

Thank you, Chairman Boucher, for holding this timely hearing.

I want to welcome Assistant Secretary Strickling, who is appearing before our Committee for the first time as the Administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), as well as Jonathan Adelstein, who left the Federal Communications Commission after seven years of service as a Commissioner to lead the Rural Utilities Service (RUS).

I also want to congratulate both of you on your recent confirmations and I look forward to working with you.

As you are well aware, the overriding purpose of "The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009" was to stimulate the economy by creating and preserving jobs.

NTIA and RUS deserve high praise for issuing the initial application guidelines in a timely fashion while incorporating enhanced transparency and accountability measures. I am pleased that the Notice of Fund Availability (NOFA) broadly reflects the objectives of the Recovery Act in stimulating the economy, creating and saving jobs, and extending broadband to hard-to-reach and underserved communities.

You and your staffs have worked around the clock to get the program up and running so that Recovery Act funds might have an immediate impact. Thank you for your ongoing effort.

There were many skeptics who said you could not get it done. And there were those who said that Congress placed so many conditions on these funds there would be too few applicants to make this effort worthwhile.

Contrary to these fears, the response to the NOFA has been overwhelming. It is clear that the public interest obligations that attach to this public money have not deterred interest or

innovation. And, it is clear that with 2,200 applications seeking over \$28 billion in funds, there is keen interest across the telecommunications and technology sector in providing all of our citizens with access to advanced broadband networks. I am confident that broadband stimulus funds will lead to new and innovative offerings that benefit our nation.

But we all understand that your work is just beginning. Now that you have established the framework for releasing these funds, you must make certain they are released wisely, transparently and efficiently.

I think most members of this Committee and the American public recognize that this overall program is an unprecedented endeavor in scope and speed. We understand that you will want to refine certain details to improve performance and maximize the benefits of the public's investment in these efforts. And I know you will be interested in receiving constructive suggestions from both sides of the aisle.

I look forward to hearing your testimony, and thank you again for appearing today.