

## **STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN RICK BOUCHER**

### **Subcommittee on Communications, Technology and the Internet Hearing Oversight of the Federal Communications Commission: The National Broadband Plan**

**March 25, 2010**

Good morning.

This morning we welcome Chairman Genachowski and the members of the FCC as we hold the first in a series of hearings focusing on the National Broadband Plan.

In the Economic Recovery Act of 2009, we directed the Commission to prepare a plan to expand broadband access and increase broadband adoption among those who have access to it.

The U.S. stands today 16<sup>th</sup> among developed nations in broadband usage, and for the benefit of our national economy and quality of life we must do better.

The Commission has done a superb job in developing the plan, and I want to commend the members of the Commission and the professional staff for the blueprint they have presented to us which when implemented will lead to far higher levels of broadband usage.

I'll comment this morning on several core recommendations the Commission has made.

First, I was pleased to observe your proposal to transition the high cost fund within the Universal Service Fund from supporting exclusively basic voice telephone service to supporting broadband deployment.

The Commission's recommendation very closely tracks the provision in the comprehensive Universal Service Reform legislation I have put forward with our colleague Mr. Terry.

Today, Universal Service monies may not be spent for broadband. Our legislation will immediately allow carriers to use USF monies for broadband deployment. We also have in our bill a mandate that carriers receiving Universal

Service monies provide broadband throughout their service territories within five years of the bill becoming law.

The carriers could no longer receive USF monies if they fail to meet this broadband build-out mandate.

The Commission's recommendation also targets using the high cost fund for broadband, and I commend the compatibility of the broadband plan with our legislation.

Secondly, I was pleased to note that the plan incorporates the recommendations that we set a high goal for future broadband speeds.

Today the typical broadband service to the home is between three and five MBS. In countries like South Korea and Japan, today's data rates for the typical subscriber are often between 50 and 100 MBS. The Commission's plan appropriately sets a goal over the coming decade of delivering to 100 million homes speeds of at least 100 MBS.

Third, the Commission's proposal for auctioning to commercial bidders the D Block of the 700 MHZ spectrum without onerous conditions is commendable.

The proceeds from the auction should be applied to helping first responders purchase and install the equipment needed to bring to fire, police and rescue agencies nationwide a truly interoperable communications capability.

It is essential that when they converge from different localities at the scene of a disaster, fire police and rescue be able to communicate with one another.

And I offer my support for obtaining the appropriations that will be needed to complete the financing of the equipment build-out for public safety.

I think that on a matter so fundamental to the nation's security, we will have bipartisan support for the provision of the needed monies for first responders.

Finally, I commend the approach of your plan to work with television broadcasters to identify spectrum they now hold that on a consensual basis could be repurposed for commercial wireless use. Broadcasters who surrender spectrum would receive compensation in exchange for a voluntary spectrum transfer. That is the right approach.

We will soon pass in the House our bipartisan bill to direct you and the NTIA to conduct a comprehensive inventory of the entire spectrum that could be used for commercial purposes—that inventory will offer a clear path for the next steps in making available adequate wireless spectrum to meet our rapidly rising spectrum needs.

You have done an outstanding job of preparing the plan and we thank you for joining us this morning to discuss it.

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