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National
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Civil Rights, Labor and Environmental Leaders Join Call Urging Congress to Clarify FCC's Authority

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Leaders representing eight national civil rights, labor, and environmental organizations urged Congress to act quickly to clarify the FCC's authority to protect an Open Internet and apply Universal Service funding to broadband. Their letter to Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Chairman John D. Rockefeller and House Energy and Commerce Chairman Henry A. Waxman follows statements by Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski which welcomed legislative action by Congress today.

Read the letter at <http://www.cwa-union.org/fccreclassification>

The United States continues to lag behind the rest of the world in high-speed networks and this has serious implications for the country's economic growth and development. That's why the nation's leading environmental, civil rights and labor organizations support the FCC in urging Congress to act, so that our nation can move forward on implementation of the FCC's National Broadband Plan.

In a letter to Chairman Rockefeller and Chairman Waxman, the organizations outlined the critical need for narrowly targeted legislation that will bring about the world class broadband network our nation needs and ensure that every American has the skills needed to participate fully in our digital society.

The organizations are: The AFL-CIO; Communications Workers of America; International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers; League of United Latin American Citizens; Minority Media and Telecom Council; the NAACP; the National Urban League and the Sierra Club.

Communications Workers of America President Larry Cohen said, "The U.S. lags behind the rest of the world when it comes to 21st century communications. Today, most U.S. broadband networks can't deliver the speeds necessary to run advanced applications and services that can support sustainable communities and enable cost-effective improvements in education, energy, health, and public services. We must make investment a priority and that requires narrow legislation that makes the FCC's authority clear. "

Brent Wilkes, Executive Director of the League of United Latin American Citizens said, "Congressional action to clarify the FCC's authority on broadband services will help bridge the digital divide and ensure that all Latinos have access to the digital skills, technology and resources necessary for economic opportunity and civic engagement."

Marc Morial, President of the National Urban League said, "The digital divide is real and expanding, with millions of Americans now shut out of the benefits of the Internet Age. The FCC's National Broadband Plan includes real goals to bring affordable access to unserved and underserved communities, but we need congressional action to make the FCC's authority clear."

Hilary V. Shelton, senior vice president, NAACP, said, "It is vital to our nation that all Americans and all communities have access to high speed broadband. We cannot allow these communities to remain underserved or disconnected from the tools that drive economic development and personal growth and opportunity. The FCC's national broadband plan is a good start, but there must be congressional action to give the FCC the authority it needs to build on that plan."

Michael Brune, Executive Director of the Sierra Club said, "The expanded adoption and utilization of broadband technology can play a vital role in achieving our national goals of energy independence and efficiency. Congress should take the lead and ensure that there is a regulatory framework in place that will foster continued innovation and deployment to support the sustainable communities our nation must have."