

Background

The new President and Congress have given the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) several new jobs to complete in the effort to make broadband, or high speed access to the Internet, available to all Americans. This effort is based on the belief that every American needs to have access to broadband to have the doors of economic and social opportunity open to them. The effort requires the FCC to:

- Develop a forward-looking national broadband plan to ensure that all Americans have access to broadband capability.
- Contribute to efforts of the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture to award \$7.2 billion in grants, loans, and loan guarantees to hasten roll-out of the facilities needed to provide broadband and educate consumers to use this infrastructure.
- Collect and report far more detailed and comprehensive information on the status of broadband deployment, adoption, and use, including how broadband service in the US compares to broadband service in other countries.

National Broadband Plan

In February 2009, as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, Congress directed the FCC to develop, by February 17, 2010, a plan that seeks to ensure that people of the United States have access to broadband capability. The FCC sought input on the development of this national broadband plan through a Notice of Inquiry (NOI) that asked questions about all aspects of broadband, including how to: 1) define broadband access and capability; 2) establish benchmarks to measure progress toward achieving deployment to all people living in the United States; 3) make broadband more affordable and useful; and 4) achieve specific policy goals such as consumer welfare, civic participation, public safety, community development, health care delivery, education, and job creation and economic growth. The FCC received over 500 comments in response to the NOI, and reply comments are due July 21, 2009. To view the NOI, visit hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmat/h/FCC-09-31A1.pdf.

Broadband Funding

The Act also allocates the \$7.2 billion mentioned above for improving broadband infrastructure and consumer education. For more information about applying for broadband grants or loans, visit www.broadbandUSA.gov.

Rural Broadband Report

In compliance with the requirements of the 2008 Farm Bill, on May 22, 2009, the Acting Chairman of the FCC delivered to Congress a report on a comprehensive rural broadband strategy. The report makes several recommendations including: 1) enhancing coordination among and between federal, Tribal, state, and community agencies, governments and organizations; 2) coordinating data collection and mapping efforts at the federal, Tribal, and state levels; 3) supporting consumer education and training initiatives to stimulate and sustain broadband demand; and 4) identifying important policies and proceedings that support further broadband deployment such as universal service and network openness.

(More)



Rural Broadband Report (cont'd.)

The Rural Broadband Report will become an important building block for the National Broadband Plan. To view the Rural Broadband Report, visit hraunfoss.fcc.gov/edocs_public/attachmatch/DOC-291012A1.pdf.

Broadband Data Improvement Act

In October 2008, Congress enacted the Broadband Data Improvement Act (BDIA) to improve the quantity and quality of data the FCC collects on the deployment and adoption of broadband services. The BDIA requires the FCC to compile a list of geographical areas not served by any provider of advanced telecommunications capability, and, if Census Bureau data is available, determine the population, population density, and average per capita income of each unserved area. Additionally, the FCC must undertake a detailed international comparison of US broadband service capability to broadband service capability in 75 communities in at least 25 countries. In March 2009, the FCC sought comment on how it should implement the international comparison requirement, and staff of the FCC's International Bureau is gathering broadband information from various sources.

Section 706 Annual Report

The FCC must publish reports annually evaluating whether advanced telecommunications capability is being deployed to all Americans in a reasonable and timely fashion. The FCC plans to release an additional Notice of Inquiry to fulfill this obligation, and to integrate its broader efforts on improved data collection and the National Broadband Plan into this year's report.

For More Information

For more information about broadband in general, see the FCC consumer fact sheet at www.fcc.gov/cgb/consumerfacts/highspeedinternet.html, or visit the FCC Web site at www.broadband.gov. For information about other communications issues, visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb, or contact the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing fccinfo@fcc.gov; calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

###

For this or any other consumer publication in an accessible format (electronic ASCII text, Braille, large print, or audio), please write or call us at the address or phone number below, or send an e-mail to FCC504@fcc.gov.

To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, visit www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts.

This document is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceedings or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

7/09/09

