

Via email

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Dear Kevin Martin,

At present there are at least 114 million adults in the United States that have limited or no access to the Internet. This infrastructural inadequacy highlights a clear gap between the United States and many of its global counterparts, in addition to the ever increasing distance between Americans here at home.

All Americans need and deserve broadband access that is fast, free and family friendly. In addition to helping close the global gap in access, service like this would go a long way in bridging the digital divide that now separates Americans from themselves. Why is the playing field not level? Why is basic wireless broadband service not a right of every American?

Increasing access to wireless broadband technology would serve many ends: it would increase involvement in civic discourse by making news and governmental services more readily available, it would foster an equality of opportunity through an equality of access and it would undeniably drive the American economy to grow.

The Department of Homeland Security, as well as other public safety organizations, has estimated that a system of that magnitude could take decades to develop and cost the government billions of dollars. The current proposal in front of you, on the other hand, has found a way to reduce that cost to as little as \$1 billion. In addition, through this plan, 95% of the population will have access to free broadband Internet within 10 years.

I urge you to consider M2Z Networks' proposal for implementing a national network of free wireless broadband Internet access to help small and independent businesses reap the rewards of a fully connected America. There are 5.4 million small businesses that currently have broadband Internet access. With that access, however, is a steep price that many struggle to afford. Unbridled access would allow entrepreneurs to focus their budgets on things such as innovative geo-tagging technology. In addition, it would simply serve these businesses in a way no other provider has to date by making free universal wireless broadband connectivity a reality.

Implementation of a fast, free, and family friendly universal broadband access program, like that supported by the Coalition for Free Broadband Now, would be a welcome, and necessary, first step in protecting our children online while at the same time ensuring a prosperous future for both children and the Internet itself. In addition, it should be noted that several of our global competitors already offer this sort of service to their citizens, setting a pace that America is already well behind of.

This proposal could come at no better time, since the United States is falling behind many other nations in levels of wireless broadband Internet usage and education. Currently the US ranks just above Estonia in broadband penetration. Nations with greater access to the internet have been shown to perform better in educational settings. A solution has been proposed, now is the time to act. We can't let our nation fall any farther behind!

The benefits of such a fast, free, and family friendly universal broadband network on the education system would be significant - providing broadband access to inner city schools would allow such schools to remain competitive with not only their suburban counterparts, but their global counterparts as well. As the situation is, less than half of minority community elementary schools have access to the Internet.

Sincerely,

Reem Mansour

Cc: Sen. Richard Durbin
Sen. Barack Obama
Rep. Dan Lipinski
Deborah Taylor Tate
Robert McDowell
Jonathan Adelstein
Michael Copps