



*Department of Communications*

3211 FOURTH STREET NE · WASHINGTON DC 20017 · 202-541-3200 · FAX 202-541-3173

October 23, 2009

The Honorable Julius Genachowski  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> St. S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write to support your recent action to open a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* to receive public comment on proposals to meet the goal of an Internet open to all speakers, noncommercial as well as commercial. I understand that there will be complex issues to discuss about how to reach this goal, and I welcome the discussions which will take place in a public forum open to all.

Since 2005, when the FCC ended more than thirty years of regulation that prohibited the companies controlling the infrastructure connecting people to the Internet from interfering with accessibility to content, there has been uncertainty about how and whether those companies can block, speed up or slow down Internet content. This public proceeding, designed to reach the goal of ensuring that companies providing Internet access do not favor or disfavor categories of speech, will provide certainty to those using the Internet that this vital medium is open to their messages. With public interest, noncommercial (including religious) programming such a low priority for broadcasters and cable companies, the Internet is one of the few electronic mass mediums available to churches and religious groups to communicate their messages and the values fundamental to the fabric of our communities.

By supporting the goal of continuing the Internet as it has developed, that is, an “open” Internet, USCCB also supports the rights of parents to protect their children from pornography. The means of protecting children from such material is available to parents without ceding it to companies providing Internet access, but this is another issue all can discuss in the FCC’s public proceeding.

I am concerned about Internet access because communication is at the heart of the Church’s mission. Pope Benedict XVI has cautioned against a solely profit-driven media that ignores the common good. Your action today ensures that these vital issues will be discussed in a public forum where USCCB and other stakeholders can make their views heard.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend George H. Niederauer  
Archbishop of San Francisco  
Chairman, Communications Committee

Cc: Commissioner Michael Copps, Commissioner Robert McDowell, Commissioner Mignon Clyburn,  
Commissioner Meredith Atwell Baker