

**St. Louis Society for the Blind and Visually Impaired**  
**8770 Manchester Rd.**  
**Saint Louis, Missouri 63144-2724**



Chairman Julius Genachowski  
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker  
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn  
Commissioner Michael J. Copps  
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell

Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: GN Docket No. 09-191

March 31, 2010

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners:

Throughout the Open Internet proceeding, I have taken the opportunity to express my concern regarding the adoption of increased “net neutrality” regulations and its potential to adversely affect the blind and visually impaired population. As I have previously expressed, many in our community do not have access to the numerous benefits of broadband. The lack of adoption is the result of a number of factors, including the cost and availability of broadband, as well as the cost and availability of accessible technology which enable broadband use.

I thank the Commission for its recognition of the importance of broadband accessibility for individuals with disabilities and am encouraged by the National Broadband Plan’s proposal to convene a Broadband Accessibility Working Group. However, I remain concerned that the non-discrimination clause outlined in the Open Internet NPRM could undo some of the benefits that make broadband so helpful to the blind and visually impaired population, particularly in the areas of healthcare, education and telework, to name a few. To ensure that these sectors continue to evolve, they need access to a well-managed, flexible broadband network. Regulations which constrain service providers’ ability to respond to these sectors’ demands and limit businesses’ flexibility to provide beneficial services will only do more harm than good.

Today, about 50 million Americans, or 1 in 5 people, are living with at least one disability, and most Americans will experience a disability some time during the course of their lives, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. In order to enable these individuals to live more independently and help them stay connected in a digital society, we must make universal broadband adoption and deployment a national priority and avoid enacting policies which will only detract from this goal.

I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David C. Ekin".

David C. Ekin, ACSW, LCSW  
President