NATIVE WELLNESS Institute

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April 6, 2010

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Commissioners Michael J. Copps, Robert M. McDowell, Mignon Clyburn, Meredith Attwell Baker
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Preserving Open Internet (GN Docket Number 09-191) and Broadband Industry Practices (WC Docket Number 07-52)

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners:

I write to you today regarding the Commission's inquiry into preserving the open Internet that Americans enjoy today. As a Native American leader concerned about opportunities for the social and economic advancement of my people, I am deeply concerned that this proposal may inadvertently leave Tribal Lands disproportionately underserved by broadband Internet. I ask that you look carefully at which Internet companies will be regulated under any new rules, which companies will not, and how the rules will affect the motivations any of them may have to build the networks we desperately need.

While I commend the National Broadband Plan's recommendation for a Tribal Broadband Fund to support sustainable deployment and adoption programs, the plan also suggests that bringing next-generation broadband to every U.S. household will cost several hundred billion dollars. As currently proposed, the open Internet rules may create an environment in which that money comes almost exclusively from telecommunications companies and their customers. Even with a Tribal Broadband Fund subsidizing Internet deployment and subscription, I fear it will neither create sufficient incentives for private investment nor provide enough of a subsidy to keep prices affordable for non-adopters.

Lastly, I know that the Commission is very concerned that a series of "gatekeepers" could diminish equal access to the Internet. These concerns so far have been largely theoretical, but I commend you for your attention – no one should be able to block free exercise of speech on the Internet or favor some people or businesses over others. I encourage the Commission to take a careful look at all companies doing business on the Internet to ensure that any new rules protect users from all forms of discrimination and bad behavior, especially in areas like ours where so many users will be first-time users.

I thank you for considering our views on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Jillene Joseph, Executive Director
Native Wellness Institute