



City of Charleston
Joseph P. Riley, Jr.
Mayor

FILED/ACCEPTED

FEB 25 2011

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

February 24, 2011

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

**Re: Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service Lifeline and Link Up
CC Docket No. 96-45; WC Docket 03-109**

Dear Chairman Genachowski,

At a time where more than 9% of South Carolinians are unemployed, I want the FCC to understand how valuable the free phone services are that the Lifeline program provides especially to the citizens of Charleston. I am glad the Board has decided to look for ways to minimize fraud, waste and abuse in the program so that deserving and qualified families will still have access to this important program.

As our nation struggles to overcome unemployment and other economic challenges, the Lifeline program is more invaluable than ever. Reports both academic and anecdotal have shown that access to phone service leads to greater chances of employment. And my city's, and our nation's, residents should be able to access these services in the case of an emergency.

I agree wholeheartedly with the Board's recommendations that the Commission put together a plan for uniformity on areas that would apply to all Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) that would help eliminate waste and abuse in this program. In doing so, I want to make sure that low-income support of the fund remains strong. This is such a beneficial program to my city's residents and my concern is that it remains accessible and free to those who qualify.

Low-income support is cyclical and this should be acknowledged. As you may be aware, unemployment has grown by 3.8% in my state since 2008 and more than 100,000 South Carolina households are eligible for SNAP assistance. In these challenging economic times, programs such as Lifeline have a real and tangible impact on the lives of my constituents and I would like the Commission to recognize this, as we believe they do. As this recession begins to recede, the numbers of those eligible for Lifeline should also drop accordingly.

I urge the Commission to adopt the recommendations from the Federal-State Joint Board, as I would like to see these programs be sustainable in the short and long-term. My only concern is that the Commission should not adopt policies that cap funding for low-income support or hinder competition in an already underserved market. For example, the FCC should not mandate (even minimal) monthly subscriber fees for Lifeline users, which would present



P.O. Box 652 Charleston, South Carolina 29408
843-577-6970 Fax 843-720-3887

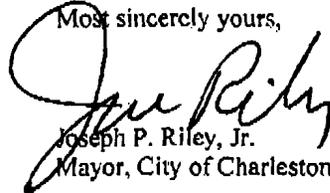
No. of Copies rec'd 0
List ABCDE

Chairman Julius Genachowski
February 24, 2011; Page Two

an undue administrative burden on both carriers and consumers. The best approach to curtailing fraud and abuse is establishment of an eligibility database.

Thank you for your service to my constituents and this country. I look forward to seeing your proposed changes to strengthen these vital programs.

Most sincerely yours,



Joseph P. Riley, Jr.
Mayor, City of Charleston

JPR,jr/cb

cc: Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker