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March 21, 2011

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

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write today with concerns regarding the proposed Federal Communication Commission (FCC) rules on utility pole attachments that are expected to be adopted on April 7.

While I fully support the National Broadband Plan's goal of improving our communications infrastructure to make low-cost, high-speed Internet available to all Americans, I want to be certain that this does not come at the expense of critical infrastructure. In particular, I am concerned that changes to rules governing pole attachment access and rates could negatively affect the safety and reliability of electric utility systems.

Our electric grid is a complex system that – although resilient – remains susceptible to factors beyond a utility's control ranging from the weather to the strain of unauthorized attachments. The record is already replete with examples of unauthorized attachments compromising reliability, safety and the restoration process. I strongly suggest you consider these concerns carefully, and ensure protections are in place to guarantee that critical electric infrastructure is not compromised by promoting attachments without adequate resources to mitigate this new strain on utility systems.

By overemphasizing speed and low costs in deployment of telecommunications attachments, I am concerned the FCC is overlooking potentially negative impacts on electric system reliability and creating possibly dangerous situations for the line workers who brave the elements to restore power as quickly and safely as possible.

With such dramatic implications for our nation's critical energy infrastructure, I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Rigby", written over the word "Sincerely,".

cc: The Honorable Michael Copps
The Honorable Robert McDowell
The Honorable Mignon Clyburn
The Honorable Meredith Baker