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April 13, 2009

Bernadette McGuire-Rivera
Associate Administrator, Office of Telecommunications and Information
Applications
Broadband Technology Opportunities Program
U.S. Department of Commerce
Room 4812
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

RE: Docket Number 090309298-9299-01

Dear Ms. McGuire-Rivera,

We write you today urging you to use the funds allocated by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to encourage national broadband adoption and to help improve the quality of public safety communications for local first responders.

Today, over 90% of households have access to broadband Internet service, but barely 60% subscribe. Most of those who do not subscribe report that they do not see the relevance or necessity of high-speed Internet to their lives; others lack the necessary hardware in their homes. In general, non-subscribers lack the tech literacy necessary to cope in the information age.

Thus it is imperative that NTIA use ARRA funds to provide low-income households the necessary hardware and software to enable their connection to high-speed Internet. As these new subscribers log on, providing access to digital literacy programs will teach our citizens how to best utilize the Internet for economic, social, educational and professional growth. These programs can also teach parents how to help their children take advantage of all the Web has to offer while keeping them safe from objectionable Websites; it's critical that children in America's cities do not get left out of the digital revolution.

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A lack of Web content that “matters” to non-subscribers has been another barrier to adoption. However, by supporting organizations that promote useful Internet content – such as job application assistance, access to government services and tax credit programs – many of today’s non-subscribers would gain immensely. Therefore we urge NTIA to fund applicants that will develop relevant applications and content.

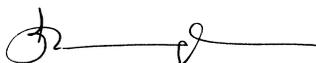
Lastly, we see ARRA as a golden opportunity to bolster the public safety communications systems on which local governments rely. When standard lines of communication are decimated – phone lines frozen by ice storms, utility poles and radio antennas felled by hurricanes – the lives of residents and emergency crews are unnecessarily compromised. By promoting the availability of satellite and other mobile technologies for first responders we can update our emergency communications and mitigate the damage from the next large-scale emergency.

Thank you for considering our comments. On behalf of local officials nationwide, we look forward to assisting NTIA in this important process.

Sincerely,



Rae Carole Armstrong
Mayor, City of Plantation



Barrington A. Russell, Sr,
Mayor, City of Lauderdale Lakes