

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

R. BRUCE JOSTEN
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

1615 H STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20062-2000
202/463-5310

June 18, 2009

The Honorable Gary Locke
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Locke:

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the world's largest business federation, representing more than three million businesses and organizations of every size, sector, and region, urges the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA) to adopt rules that would award Broadband Technology Opportunities Program grants funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Recovery Act) on an expedited basis to reputable applicants who demonstrate that they have ready-to-go projects that will bring broadband to unserved areas or spur broadband adoption.

According to the latest information from NTIA, broadband funds included in the Recovery Act will not start flowing until at least December 2009. However, with the unemployment rate increasing to 9.4% in May 2009, economic development and job creation are more important now than ever. President Obama recently pledged to accelerate spending in the Recovery Act to save or create 600,000 jobs over the next three months. Broadband is a key driver of economic growth and accelerating broadband funding from NTIA is consistent with the President's goal.

According to a recent analysis by USTelecom, broadband/ICT (information, communications, and technology) jobs pay 50% more than the hourly national average, and, for at least the next 10 years, broadband-enabled jobs will continue to be among the leading high-growth areas.¹ Connected Nation predicts that with a modest increase in broadband adoption, the United States could realize a total direct economic impact of \$134 billion annually including \$92 billion in new wages from the 2.4 million jobs created through broadband growth.²

¹ Press Release, "Broadband Drives U.S. Economic Growth, USTelecom Analysis Show," USTelecom, May 14, 2009, available at: <http://www.ustelecom.org/News/NewsItems/Broadband-Drives-US-Economic-Growth-USTelecom-Analysis-Shows.html>.

² Executive Summary, *The Economic Impact of Stimulating Broadband Nationally*, Connected Nation, Feb. 21, 2008, available at: http://www.connectednation.com/documents/Connected_Nation_EIS_Study_Executive_Summary_02212008.pdf

The Chamber reiterates its recommendation that NTIA adopt a transparent process for awarding broadband grants funded by the Recovery Act. NTIA should post all grant applications and related documents to the Web. To minimize fraud, waste, and abuse and to maximize the impact of these funds, successful applicants must have a solid track record and a sound business plan.

The Chamber looks forward to working with you and NTIA as the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program is implemented and appreciates your consideration of an expedited award process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Bruce Josten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "R." and last name "Josten" being the most legible parts.

R. Bruce Josten

Cc: Susan Crawford, Special Assistant to the President for Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy