



Labor Council for Latin American Advancement

“Un Pueblo Unido: Be Powerful! Be Heard!”

Home to the Latino Labor Movement

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National President

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April 13, 2009

The Honorable Anna Gomez
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Herbert C. Hoover Building (HCHB)
U.S. Department of Commerce / NTIA
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Secretary Gomez:

For over 30 years, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) has provided a voice for Latino working families. As the main representative of approximately 1.7 million Latino trade unionists, we strongly believe in the social and economic empowerment of our communities and work tirelessly as an advocate for the rights of our Latino workers.

In a time of economic turmoil and job uncertainty, we must ensure that Congress continues to support legislation and programs that promote job creation and investment and not burdensome regulations. To this end, the LCLAA applauds the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which includes more than \$7 billion for broadband deployment.

As our methods of communications become more sophisticated, access to broadband is no longer a luxury but a necessity. Minority and low-income communities have been disproportionately affected by the widening digital divide and need access to educational opportunities as well as life-saving health care programs. Broadband enables our Hispanic families to bridge this digital gap and can facilitate their social and economic advancement during this time of need.

As a leader in the Hispanic community, LCLAA strongly encourages the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to quickly, efficiently, and transparently disperse the funding from the stimulus to the state and local leaders to get these activities off and running. It is also imperative to get the mapping process underway quickly so communities can accurately identify underserved and unserved areas and direct resources.

To this end, the NHLA recommends the following four principles:

- 1) **Get Broadband to All Parts of the Country** – Mapping current availability of broadband is critical to ensuring that money is used efficiently and effectively. Identifying areas of need throughout all fifty states through the mapping process will provide information on broadband availability by community and allow for efficient dispersal of funds.



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- 2) **Reliance on state and local expertise** – State and local leaders have a thorough understanding of what their communities need. By awarding grants to these leaders, there will be a greater likelihood that state and local government along with community-based organizations can identify qualified providers with sustainable business plans to ensure that broadband systems can reach those areas in greatest need first through the creation of public-private partnerships.
- 3) **Transparency and Accountability** – Eliminating potential waste and inefficiencies are essential to maximizing the benefits of the stimulus money. As state and local leaders help guide deployment, there must be a built-in mechanism for providing transparency to ensure funds are used appropriately.
- 4) **Prioritize Communities of Need** – Funding must focus first and foremost on deployment to those communities where no broadband connections exist. State and local organizations along with qualified providers can help focus attention on such unserved and underserved areas first, followed by the other communities that also need additional broadband access.

Delivery of next-generation broadband services will spur innovation, investment and create good paying jobs, while also helping provide solutions to some of the country’s biggest challenges like health care, education and energy efficiency. Technology and broadband is a gateway to social, political, and economic empowerment for all working families across our nation.

Sincerely,

Gabriela D. Lemus
Executive Director

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