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Sent: Monday, May 18, 2015 6:59 PM
To: BOCrhc2015
Subject: Judiciary broadband use in the Northern Marianas

A Little Money Could Do a Lot of Good

I am currently the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas (CNMI) Judiciary's Grant Administrator and I am writing in response to the "Broadband Opportunity Notice and Request for Comment" bulletin.

The CNMI is a U.S. territory located in the Western Pacific, northeast of Guam, and includes the islands of Saipan, Rota, and Tinian. The current broadband service providers for the CNMI are IT&E and Docomo Pacific. IT&E owns and controls the broadband that connects the CNMI islands with the IT&E hub facilities on Guam.

It is the Judiciary's position that a grant is needed to allow the Judiciary to purchase additional bandwidth between Saipan, Tinian, and Rota so as to increase the efficiency of court administration at the Judiciary's satellite courts on the smaller islands of Tinian and Rota. As a far less expensive alternative to building additional under water bandwidth capacity for the Judiciary's purposes, an increased rented use of what exists would be advantageous to the conduct of justice and be much sooner to be put in use.

This increased bandwidth will greatly increase the Judiciary's ability to conduct court proceedings via Skype. Currently, the internet speed between the islands is insufficient for video conferencing, which precludes the Judiciary from using Skype when necessary. If the internet transmission speed was faster and more reliable, the Judiciary would greatly expand its use of video conferencing use for several court proceedings including: bail hearings, arraignments, restraining orders, emergency civil injunctions, calendar hearings, and family education services. With better internet communications the Judiciary will be able to expedite justice and save travel time and expenses of judges and support staff.

The Judiciary's budget is three-percent of the CNMI'S government budget. The Judiciary faces many challenges with respect to mandatory and necessary expenditures, and frankly would need financial assistance to procure the bandwidth needed between the islands from IT&E to provide better cost effective judiciary services to the residents on the smaller islands, Rota and Tinian.

My question is: where can the Judiciary of the CNMI find assistance for such an expanded broadband project – namely the expanded bandwidth dedicated to judiciary functions and processes estimated to cost of about \$6,000 a year. We believe that a three year project upon review will demonstrate itself to be most cost efficient, expedite the cause of justice, and provide family education avenues as well.

Your attention is appreciated.

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