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July 14, 2011

Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St. S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

RE: AT&T – T-Mobile Merger (WT Docket 11-65) - Letter to Chairman Genachowski (attached)

The attached letter reports on a meeting with the Chairman at which the merger was very briefly mentioned. The letter was inadvertently not filed in the docket. We are doing that today.

Sincerely,

Vanessa R. Williams
NCBM Executive Director

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June 28, 2011

Hon. Julian Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: Following Up On Our Meeting of June 23, 2011
Rural Broadband Report to Congress
AT&T Merger (WT Docket 11-65)

Dear Chariman Genachowski:

On behalf of the National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM) and the 40 million Americans NCBM's members represent, thank you for being so gracious as to meet with our delegation on June 23 to discuss both rural and urban city mobile broadband, the Commission's July 17 Rural Broadband Report to Congress, and other telecom policy issues affecting African Americans in urban and rural communities.

Whereas 38% of African American mayors preside over small and impoverished rural communities in the southeast. Few of these communities enjoy the fast, reliable broadband service that would serve as an engine for job creation and economic revitalization and, thus, enable their communities to build their tax bases and provide essential services. Thus we deeply appreciate your commitment to ensuring that mobile broadband reaches rural communities across the United States. As your Rural Broadband Report noted, "All Americans, whether they live in rural or urban areas, should have access to robust and affordable broadband services—as well as the ability to use those services—in order to take advantage of the many opportunities the digital revolution has created." Mobile broadband is quickly reshaping the United States landscape, and revolutionizing the way in which Americans, and people throughout the globe, are communicating, interacting, and working with one another.

As we discussed, much work must be done to ensure that the digital divide is bridged. In a recent report The Joint Center stated that of the 60% of African Americans who have not adopted broadband at home, 11% cite affordability as the reason why. As we discussed because of its affordability, African Americans overwhelmingly embrace wireless broadband to access the Internet. Not only must we work together to find a way to bring wireless broadband to every corner of the nation, we must take pointed measures to make sure that it is affordable and reliable. The Rural Broadband Report noted that "8 percent of the U.S. rural population was not covered by either type of [broadband] network as of November 2009, compared to only 2 percent of the entire U.S. population." It is imperative that we act quickly to close this urban/rural disparity in service.

NCBM also applauds the Commission in its efforts to work cooperatively with Tribal, federal, state, and local government entities and industry and consumer groups on rural broadband issues. We appreciate that to encourage rural broadband deployment, the Commission is collecting more granular broadband data and reducing barriers to broadband deployment by improving access to poles and rights of way for wire line and wireless facilities. We encourage the Commission to continue to search for and consider every potential solution available.

For example, as amplified in our joint (NAACP, NCBM and 15 additional organizations) May 31 letter regarding the AT&T/T-Mobile merger, NCBM believes that approving the merger would be one of the strongest and most viable solutions to reducing the barriers to nationwide next-generation broadband deployment and increasing the availability of spectrum nationwide.

In a subsequent meeting, we'd like to address privacy issues. Our inclination is that consumer privacy should be handled first-tier, and as a one-stop shop, by the FTC in light of its mission to protect individual consumers. Internet privacy issues are of vital importance to our mayors insofar as it impacts minority broadband adoption.

We also look forward to continuing our discussion on incentive auctions. The National Broadband Plan correctly recognized that underutilized DTV spectrum simply must be repurposed to avoid wireless spectrum exhaustion in major cities. Many of our Mayors preside over cities most affected by this spectrum crunch. Our cities' competitiveness and our citizens' economic opportunities depend highly on the success of spectrum incentive auctions. Thus NCBM would like to help the Commission achieve this much-needed objective.

The National Conference of Black Mayors is greatly appreciative of and encouraged by our meeting. We hope that the Commission continues the good work of making systematic progress to improving the lives of African Americans throughout the United States by making it possible for every American to access, adopt and use mobile broadband.

We appreciate your invitation for us to return to drill down deeper on many of the other issues we briefly mentioned in our meeting – the state of Black radio, tax and other incentives to promote minority media ownership, merger policy generally and the AT&T merger specifically, and how to close the digital divide. NCBM would like to request a follow up meeting with our Telecom/ Broadband Committee at your convenience within the next 3 weeks. We thank you for your leadership.

Respectfully,

Mayor Robert L. Bowser
NCBM President

Vanessa R. Williams
NCBM Executive Director

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