

**REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
COMCAST INTERNET ESSENTIALS EVENT
JOINT CENTER FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STUDIES
WASHINGTON, DC
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Thank you all for joining us. Thank you Ralph Everett and the Joint Center for hosting us and for the Center's valuable research which has given us a better understanding of what we need to do to close the digital divide.

Thank you John Horrigan who will be leading today's panel discussion. John was one of the chief architects of the National Broadband Plan's broadband adoption strategy.

Thank you to Comcast and David Cohen for your important and vital work with the Internet Essentials program. I'm also pleased to hear that Tony Dungy has signed on to serve as national spokesman for Internet Essentials.

Efforts like Internet Essentials and Connect2Compete hold enormous promise and reflect the best in public-private partnerships to address pressing national issues. In this case, the digital divide.

In 2011 Comcast worked with the FCC on a commitment to provide discounted broadband service to millions of low-income Americans.

Focused on two million families who qualify for the free school lunch program, Internet Essentials as originally introduced provides \$9.95 a month broadband, \$150 PCs, and digital literacy training.

I commend Comcast for stepping up its original commitment. Earlier this year, Comcast extended the program to an additional 300,000 families that receive *reduced* price school lunch, and doubled the speed of the Internet Essentials broadband service.

The concept is important, but the results are what matters. And today, through Internet Essentials, more than 400,000 Americans are enjoying the benefits of broadband for the first time. That's good news for these Americans and good news for our country.

Why is it so important that eligible families take advantage of broadband adoption programs like Internet Essentials? It's important because being online is essential to full participation in our 21st century economy.

Broadband gives every American with an Internet connection access to a world of new opportunities that otherwise would be beyond their reach.

Now, in the past few years we've made some progress on closing our broadband adoption and digital skills gaps.

For example, Latino and African American adoption rates are up about 10% over the past few years, and Internet-connected smartphone adoption rates among minority populations are higher than the national average.

But despite this progress, there is more work to do. 30% of Americans still don't have broadband at home. This matters more every day as the costs of digital exclusion continue to rise.

In today's world, you need broadband to find and apply for a job, and increasingly you need digital skills to get and keep jobs. Almost all Fortune 500 companies post their job openings exclusively online.

Almost all require online job applications – from Wal-Mart and Target, to many small businesses. Altogether, over half of today's jobs require technology skills, and nearly 80% of jobs in the next decade are projected to require digital skills.

When it comes to education, the costs of digital exclusion are high and rising. Increasingly, student opportunity suffers, materially, if they can't do online assignments at home and if teachers can't connect with families.

Just last week I met with a group of superintendents who see digital learning as their single biggest hope for their students' learning and futures. They were from North Carolina, New Mexico, Georgia, Idaho, and Florida. They said their number one roadblock was lack of student broadband access at home.

The LEAD Commission that Secretary Arne Duncan and I helped form has identified the same concern. Led energetically by TPG's Jim Coulter, and including Columbia President Lee Bollinger, former Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, and Common Sense Media founder Jim Steyer, the LEAD Commission is preparing a blueprint for a national strategy for education and technology, and they too are watching with great interest Internet Essentials and Connect2Compete.

At the FCC, all of this terrific work is informing our implementation of the new Connect America Fund, and our ongoing reform and modernization of the E-Rate program, the Universal Service High-Cost Fund, and Lifeline programs.

Protecting and promoting competition in the broadband marketplace is also a big part of the FCC's broadband adoption strategy.

Competition maximizes broadband providers' incentives to add customers and is critical to ensuring consumers have affordable choices for broadband.

We all must continue to push forward and work together to tackle broadband challenges.

That's why I'm pleased to hear that, today, Comcast and Connect2Compete are announcing a partnership, starting with device distribution.

I'm also pleased to hear that the Department of Labor's job centers will help spread the word about Comcast Internet Essential's offerings, joining Connect2Compete, which has a similar marketing arrangement.

Secretary Solis knows the importance of broadband access and digital literacy skills to finding and keeping a job, and I commend her leadership at the Department of Labor for partnering to promote broadband adoption.

Internet Essentials and Connect2Compete are making a real impact, connecting hundreds of thousands of Americans to our digital economy and society.

Let's keep working together to forge a future where all Americans benefit from broadband.