

**REMARKS OF  
COMMISSIONER ROBERT M. MCDOWELL  
OF THE  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
INAUGURATING THE LAUNCH  
OF THE  
INTERNET ESSENTIALS BROADBAND ADOPTION PROGRAM  
AT  
CHIMBORAZO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA  
OCTOBER 11, 2012**

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Thank you, Kyle, for that kind introduction.

Thank you also to Mayor Jones, Councilwoman Newbille, and State Delegate McClellan for your remarks.

And a special thank you to Principal Burke, for your hospitality at your fine school. It's invigorating to see so many bright young faces in the audience. You must be very proud of your students. I look forward to seeing more of your school later today.

As a father of three young children, I have a personal interest in America's youth – especially regarding the use of technology. To put in perspective how fast technology has changed and equally how adept America's youth are with technology, I think of my youngest son, Cormac. He is five; or to put it another way, he was born in the same year as the first iPhone. Literally, before he could walk, he knew how to use it better than I could.

Here's another amazing example of how far technology has come. In 1965, one of our country's finest universities, MIT, had built its own computer. That was a big deal for a

university back then, and that computer cost \$11 million in today's dollars.<sup>1</sup> Today, on the other hand, the microprocessor in a mobile device like a smartphone is more than one million times smaller, one million times less expensive and a thousand times more powerful.<sup>2</sup> That equates to more than a billion-fold increase in the amount of computing power a person can buy per dollar.<sup>3</sup> What does this all mean for each of us in our daily lives? That today any one of us has the opportunity to possess more computing power in the palm of our hands than *all* of the computing power that put people on the moon over 40 years ago through the Apollo program.<sup>4</sup>

In short, these exponential increases in capacity and decreases in costs have resulted in more information being shared with more people than at any other time in world history.

If we want these positive trends to continue, we must allow a competitive private sector to have the freedom to invest and innovate to meet consumer demand. That's one reason I am delighted to be here today to help launch Comcast's Internet Essentials broadband adoption program in the beautiful capital of our Commonwealth, Richmond.

I agree with our hosts today that one key component to ensuring academic and career success for Americans is improving the broadband adoption rate in our country. Simply put, increased broadband adoption will help grow America's economy and increase our global competitiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ray Kurzweil, *Making the World a Billion Times Better*, WASH. POST, Apr. 13, 2008, at B4.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> Michio Kaku, *Physics of the Future* 21 (2011).

While over two-third's of Americans currently subscribe to a broadband service, recent studies have also shown that America *is* moving in the right direction when it comes to finding ways to encourage broadband adoption.

For example, the National Urban League released a study several months ago that found that the overall broadband adoption difference between African Americans and other Americans narrowed significantly between 2009 and 2010 - closing the difference by eight percentage points.<sup>5</sup> Of course, more can be done and is being done through efforts like Comcast's "Internet Essentials."

One of the obstacles to broadband adoption is "relevancy" – a topic of today's event. Why is broadband important to you? What do you like about the Internet? The use of broadband Internet access can help enhance a student's education early on. It allows students to connect with other classrooms in our country and around the world. It provides a vantage point to take virtual field trips to fascinating places and learn about how people in various parts of the world live. Students can learn from their differences and their similarities, and they can have fun while learning.

And if you're having fun while learning, you're going to learn more. And if you learn more, you'll do better in school. And if you do better in school and *stay* in school, you're more likely to get a more interesting and higher-paying job. And this virtuous cycle will help us leave behind a better America for our children and grandchildren.

Thank you for having me here today, and congratulations to Richmond and Comcast's Internet Essentials program on the launch of this positive and constructive program.

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<sup>5</sup> National Urban League Policy Institute, *Connecting the Dots: Linking Broadband Adoption to Job Creation and Job Competitiveness 7*, available at [http://www.twcresearchprogram.com/pdf/TWC\\_WijewardenaReport.pdf](http://www.twcresearchprogram.com/pdf/TWC_WijewardenaReport.pdf).