

Congressional Rural Caucus meets with FCC Chairman to discuss national broadband plan

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Washington, Dec. 8 – Members of the Congressional Rural Caucus met with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chair Julius Genachowski Tuesday to discuss progress on a National Broadband Plan and how it can best benefit rural communities. Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the FCC has been tasked with creating a National Broadband Plan by February 17, 2010 to ensure all Americans have access to broadband capability and to establish benchmarks for meeting this goal.

“Our nation’s rural communities are often overlooked when it comes to expanding and updating infrastructure, including access to broadband,” said Rep. Bart Stupak (D-MI),



FCC Chair Julius Genachowski at right, meeting with Rural Caucus members Betsey Markey (D-CO), Adrian Smith (R-NE), Glenn Thompson (R-PA), Travis Childers (D-MS), and Bart Stupak (D-MI).

Co-Chair of the Caucus’ Telecommunications Task Force. “Developing a national broadband plan is an important step toward making sure that all Americans, regardless of where they live, have access to broadband and the economic, educational and social benefits that it provides. Today’s meeting with Chairman

Genachowski was beneficial and I look forward to continued conversations with the FCC as work continues to develop and implement a national broadband plan.”

“The telecommunications landscape has greatly changed in recent years and it is imperative that all Americans, especially in rural areas of the country have access to high

quality broadband services,” said Rep. Lee Terry (R-NE), Co-Chair of the Caucus’ Telecommunications Task Force.

“Creating a National Broadband Plan that ensures access in rural areas is critical to strengthening our communities and fueling economic development,” said Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Travis Childers (D-MS). “The Congressional Rural Caucus thanks Chairman Genachowski for joining us today and listening to our needs and concerns as a plan continues to take shape. Basic broadband service is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity. We look forward to continuing to communicate with the FCC in order to create a broadband strategy that works for rural America.”

“In recent years, rural states like Nebraska have seen a brain drain, causing us to lose our most vital economic assets to more populated areas. Broadband is one of the many tools we have to counter this brain drain,” Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Adrian Smith (R-NE) said.

Earlier this year, the Rural Caucus sent a letter to the FCC urging the agency to address the needs of rural America as it begins to develop a National Broadband Plan.

The broadband initiatives funded under the Recovery Act are intended to accelerate broadband deployment in unserved, underserved, and rural areas and to strategic institutions that are likely to create jobs or provide significant public benefits. These initiatives include the development of a National Broadband Plan, the new Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP), and the new Rural Development Broadband Program.

For an article on USDA’s broadband program with links to additional information, go to: www.agri-pulse.com/uploaded/20091119H1.pdf.

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