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January 28, 2009

Mr. Karl Nebbia
Acting NTIA Administrator
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave, N.W. Room 5858
Washington DC, 20230

Re: *The Role of Telecommunications in Hate Crimes*

Dear Mr. Nebbia:

I write on behalf of the National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC) to request an update of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's 1993 Report to Congress, *The Role of Telecommunications in Hate Crimes* ("1993 Report").

In 1992, Congress directed the NTIA to examine the role of telecommunications in crimes of hate and violent acts against ethnic, religious, and racial minorities. In issuing its findings, the 1993 Report expressed concern that "the media may create an atmosphere that encourages and legitimizes violence against minority groups," and concluded that the "United States should take steps to combat all forms of prejudice and discrimination, not just those that culminate in a crime, while retaining the virtues of robust debate necessary for a pluralistic society." 1993 Report at 32, 70.

Many societal and technological changes have occurred since NTIA issued the 1993 Report. As demonstrated in the attached petition for inquiry, hate speech has increased over broadcast, cable and the internet since 1993, and is now prevalent even on some mainstream media outlets.

The attached petition also demonstrates that, along with this rise in hateful rhetoric, hate crimes against Latinos have also increased – most significantly since 2003. In particular, anti-Hispanic hate crimes have grown concurrently with the immigration debate and the increased media attention accompanying it.

Given this apparent correlation, it is vitally important to update information pertaining to the role of telecommunications in hate crimes. Indeed, in a September 2008 speech to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, then-Presidential candidate Barack Obama stated that

This election is about the 12 million people living in the shadows, the communities taking immigration enforcement into their own hands...*they're counting on us to stop the hateful rhetoric filling our airwaves*, rise above the fear and demagoguery, and finally enact comprehensive immigration reform.

The National Hispanic Media Coalition applauds President Obama's commitment to equality and justice, and respectfully requests that the NTIA complement his efforts by updating the 1993 Report.

Sincerely,

Jessica J. Gonzalez
Counsel to National Hispanic Media Coalition

cc: Senator Daniel Inouye, Senator Robert Menendez, Representative Edward Markey,
Representative John Dingell

Enclosure: Petition for Inquiry into Hate Speech in the Media