



## **Broadband Penetration in the Latino Community**

The “Internet has not only transformed the way we communicate, but also how we live, work and learn.”<sup>1</sup> Yet many Americans still rely on slow, dial-up Internet or have no Internet at all. Indeed, 31.3% of U.S. households have no Internet access and 36.5% of households have no broadband Internet connection. **Latinos are less likely to have broadband at home than any other minority group, and are far less likely to have it than whites** and Asians: 65.7% of whites and 67.3% of Asians have broadband at home, compared to only 39.7% of Latinos, 42.6% of Native Americans, and 45.9% of African Americans.

## **The Importance of Broadband for Latinos**

Broadband is a platform for social and economic opportunity. It can lower the geographic barriers and help minimize socioeconomic disparities—connecting people from otherwise disconnected communities to job opportunities, avenues for educational advancement and channels for communication. Broadband is a particularly important platform for historically disadvantaged communities including racial and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and recent immigrants.<sup>2</sup>

Affordable and accessible broadband access is important to everyone, but particularly for Latinos. Research from the Pew Hispanic Center indicates that young Latinos are generally “satisfied with their lives, optimistic about their futures and place a high value on education, hard work and career success.”<sup>3</sup> 72% of Latino youth expect to be better off financially than their parents, and 89% believe that a college degree is important to getting ahead in life. Yet they are much more likely than other American youths to drop out of school, and to live in poverty. 75% of Latinos who cut off their education prior to college cite financial pressure to support a family as the main reason.

Unrestricted broadband Internet access can play a huge role in enabling these youth to pursue their dreams through online education and vocational training, even as they face high drop-out rates and poverty. Moreover, in this day and age, access to everything the Internet provides is not just a luxury, but rather a necessity. Those without open Internet access cannot survive and succeed because they are foreclosed from financial aid and job applications, online learning experiences, information about health and transportation, research for homework assignments, and countless other important opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> LAWRENCE STRICKLING, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION AT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, DIGITAL NATION, *available at* [http://www.ntia.doc.gov/reports/2010/NTIA\\_internet\\_use\\_report\\_Feb2010.pdf](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/reports/2010/NTIA_internet_use_report_Feb2010.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION, CONNECTING AMERICA: THE NATIONAL BROADBAND PLAN 169 (rel. Mar. 16, 2010), *available at* <http://www.broadband.gov/download-plan/>.

<sup>3</sup> PEW HISPANIC CENTER, BETWEEN TWO WORLDS: HOW YOUNG LATINOS COME OF AGE IN AMERICA 1 (2009).

## **NHMC's Efforts to Make Broadband Available and Affordable to Latinos – Championing Universal Service Reform**

### **Advocating for Telephone and Broadband Internet Service for Every Home**

On Thursday, July 16th, NHMC submitted comments to the Federal Communications Commission on the Lifeline and Link Up universal service programs.<sup>4</sup> Currently, these programs help subsidize telephone service in low income homes across the country. The FCC is in the process of reforming and updating the programs to reflect the needs of today's society.

NHMC urged the FCC to improve outreach initiatives since many people whom the programs are designed for are unaware that the programs exist. NHMC also advocated that broadband Internet access be subsidized much like telephone connections are today, but cautioned that broadband subsidies not be granted at the expense of the current telephone subsidies, which continue to bring telephone service to many homes that would otherwise be unconnected.

### **Advocating for Greater Internet Access at Schools and Libraries**

On Friday, June 9th, NHMC submitted comments to the Federal Communications Commission about the "E-rate" universal service program, recommending ways in which the program could be modified to expand broadband Internet access to better serve students and library patrons.<sup>5</sup> Since 1996 E-rate has provided subsidies that have significantly bolstered Internet access for schools and libraries across the country, especially in poor neighborhoods and in communities of color. However, there are still a number of schools and libraries that do not have any Internet access whatsoever, as well as many that have very slow Internet connections. Even in schools and libraries that have high speed Internet, those connections are not always utilized to their full potential. In addition, many schools and libraries qualify for E-rate funding but do not apply for it because the process is unduly tedious.

NHMC urged the FCC to adopt policies that will expand Internet access in schools and libraries in poor neighborhoods, because those are the places where people without home Internet connections can connect online without paying the expensive fees. NHMC's central policy proposals focus on maximizing opportunities for digital learning experiences for students and library patrons by (1) expanding hours, (2) funding staff to teach people how to use the technology and (3) simplifying the application process so that all schools and libraries have the time and resources to apply.

### **Supporting Reclassification of Broadband Internet Connections as Telecommunications Services**

NHMC supports reclassification because it provides a sound path to accelerating affordable broadband access for the Latino community. According the FCC's General Counsel, the D.C. Circuit's recent decision in *Comcast v. FCC* may affect a significant number of proposals in the National Broadband Plan that are aimed at connecting low-income Americans, including universal service reform.<sup>6</sup> Reclassification will give the FCC sound legal footing to complete important reforms that will enhance broadband affordability and adoption in the Latino community, such as Lifeline.

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<sup>4</sup> NHMC's comments can be read at

<http://www.nhmc.org/sites/default/files/NHMC%20Comment%20on%20Lifeline-LinkUp.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> NHMC's comments can be read at <http://www.nhmc.org/sites/default/files/NHMC%20E-Rate%20Comment.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Austin Schlick, FCC General Counsel, Implications of the Comcast/BitTorrent Decision on the National Broadband Plan, available at <http://blog.broadband.gov/?entryId=356610>. See also, Austin Schlick, FCC General Counsel, A Third-Way Legal Framework for Addressing the Comcast Dilemma, available at <http://www.broadband.gov/third-way-legal-framework-for-addressing-the-comcast-dilemma.html>.