

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science &
Transportation
512 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science &
Transportation
512 Dirksen Senate Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

November 16, 2021

Dear Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker,

We are writing to urge the swift and concurrent confirmation of Jessica Rosenworcel and Gigi Sohn for the Federal Communications Commission and Alan Davidson for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. These agencies urgently need Senate-confirmed leaders to address the critical need for affordable and resilient access to the open internet in the midst of a global pandemic and worsening climate crisis. Through bipartisan infrastructure legislation, Congress has given these agencies enormous tasks on tight deadlines. These exceptional nominees' appointments so late in the year means there can be no delay in confirming them and getting started in earnest on all of that urgent work.

These three nominees each bring decades of experience, a commitment to the public interest, and the skills necessary to fulfill the missions of these agencies.

Jessica Rosenworcel's tenure at the FCC makes her an exceptional pick for FCC Chair. She is a respected and principled advocate with a proven record of fighting for the public interest. She has long championed efforts to ensure everyone in America, particularly schoolchildren, have affordable and reliable high-speed broadband to provide them with the tools they need for a successful future. Chairwoman Rosenworcel's efforts to close the "homework gap" embody that commitment. As Acting Chair, she quickly and successfully launched the Emergency Broadband Benefit, a program that is now helping millions of Americans afford access to the internet.

For over 30 years, Gigi Sohn's priority has been ensuring that modern communications networks are available to everybody, regardless of who they are or where they live. Her life's work has embodied the standard on which the FCC bases its decisions: the public interest. She served as a top aide to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler and helped found and lead a non-profit focused on promoting an open and competitive communications and technology market. She has a proven record of bringing together varied stakeholders, including public interest advocates and companies, in bipartisan coalitions to fight for equitable broadband policies, consumer protections, competition and the open internet.

Alan Davidson has over 20 years of experience in government, industry and public interest advocacy, making him an ideal candidate to take up the interagency work of the NTIA, and to guide not only NTIA's existing spectrum allocation and broadband policy work, but also its greatly increased grantmaking and coordinating role in implementation of the bipartisan infrastructure bill's broadband funding provisions.

Even before the pandemic struck over 21 months ago, 2019 Census data showed that nearly 80 million people in the U.S. did not have adequate broadband at home.¹ According to that data, poor families and people of color are disproportionately disconnected — only 48 percent of low-income households had a fixed broadband connection at that time, and 13 million Black people, 18 million Latinx people and 1.3 million Indigenous people lacked this kind of adequate home connectivity.² Digital divide indicators like education and income disparities demonstrate that many Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities and ethnic groups are also disproportionately impacted, and some AAPI communities and individuals with reduced English proficiency levels may adopt broadband at lower rates than the national average.³

At the same time communities across the country are facing more frequent extreme weather events due to the climate crisis, and those events are taking down crucial communications infrastructure on an increasingly regular basis.

And while Congress passed historic legislation to address broadband affordability and accessibility for both urban and rural communities in the midst of the pandemic, the FCC and NTIA's ability to administer these Congressional directives — as well as their ability to promote affordability, competition, privacy, sound spectrum policy, and network resiliency along with other consumer protections using existing authorities — has been limited by the deadlocked FCC and the lack of an Assistant Secretary at NTIA.

Any delay in confirming all three of these nominees will stall progress on achieving those goals and ensuring that everyone in the United States is able to access robust, affordable high-speed internet.

We urge you to confirm these three public-interest champions before the Senate recesses at the end of the year. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

18 Million Rising
Access Humboldt
Akaku Maui Community Media
Alliance for Community Media
American Library Association
Appalshop Community Media Initiative

¹ See Comments of Free Press, FCC GN Docket No. 20-269, at 4 (filed Sept. 18, 2020), https://www.freepress.net/sites/default/files/2020-09/free_press_2020_section_706_inquiry_comments.pdf.

² See *id.*

³ See Asian Americans Advancing Justice, Telecommunications and Technology Fact Sheet, <https://advancingjustice-ajjc.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Lifeline%20Backgrounder.pdf>.

Benton Institute for Broadband & Society
Branford Community Television
California Center for Rural Policy
California Clean Money Campaign
Capital Community Media
CATS Community Access Television Services
Center for Accessible Technology
City of New Bedford Cable Access - New Bedford, MA
Color of Change
Common Sense
Communications Workers of America
Communities Closing the Urban Digital Divide
Community Media Access Collaborative
Decode Democracy
Demand Progress Education Fund
Democracy for America
Derry Community Access Media
Duluth Public Access Community Television
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Engine
FC Public Media
Fight for the Future
Free Press Action
Friends of the Earth
Granby Community Access and Media, Inc.
The Greenlining Institute
Greenpeace USA
Hawaii Consumers
Illinois for Educational Equity
Indivisible Sacramento
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Libraries Without Borders US
Local TV, inc
Lynn Community Television
Massachusetts Community Media dba MassAccess
Media Alliance
Media, Inequality & Change Center
MediaJustice
Melrose Massachusetts Television
Movement Alliance Project
Mozilla Foundation
National Association of the Deaf
National Consumers League
Native Public Media

The New Hampshire Coalition for Community Media
Newark for Educational Equity & Diversity
North Shore TV
NTEN
OD Action
The OMNI Centre for Public Media, Inc.
OMNI Productions
Open MIC (Open Media and Information Companies Initiative)
Open Technology Institute
OpenMedia
Orion Neighborhood Television (ONTV)
The Other 98%
Our Revolution
PhillyCAM
Presente.org
Progress America
Public Knowledge
Revolving Door Project
RootsAction.org
Salem Community Television, Salem NH
Salina Media Connection; Community Access TV of Salina, Inc.,
San Diego Futures Foundation
Tahoe Truckee Media
Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. (TDI)
TURN - The Utility Reform Network
United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry
Valley Shore Community Television Inc.
Western New York Library Resources Council
Winchester Community Access & Media, Inc.
Writers Guild of America West
X-Lab