

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ministers Launch Petition Drive to Bring Benefits of Broadband to Communities in Need as Quickly as Possible

Chicago, IL – Today, the Ministerial Alliance Against the Digital Divide (MAADD) announced a petition drive to encourage policymakers to support steps that will expedite implementation of the President Obama’s National Broadband Plan, particularly in lower income and rural communities. The group will collect signatures at events in states across the country and online. In Chicago, where MAADD is headquartered, the group kicked off the national effort at the Safe Haven Back to School Event and the Greater Institutional "God's on the Block" event on August 5th and August 6th.

Last year, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) developed and released a National Broadband Plan aimed at expanding affordable broadband capability to all citizens -- even in economically challenged and rural areas across the country. Efforts are currently underway to implement this plan, but with millions of Americans still unconnected in an increasingly digital society, MAADD feels that time is of the essence.

“With each passing day, those who lack a broadband connection fall further behind their digitally connected counterparts,” said Reverend Roosevelt Watkins, National President of MAADD. “Right now our low-income and rural communities are losing ground in the 21st Century marketplace, but access to broadband will put them back on equal footing and enable them to compete. President Obama and his Administration recognize the enormous benefits that broadband brings to our nation and took an important step forward by developing the National Broadband Plan. Now we need to accelerate this ambitious Plan. We cannot afford to wait.”

With this in mind, MAADD’s petition calls on President Obama to support the following steps to accelerate the implementation of the National Broadband Plan to benefit many economically challenged communities across the country as quickly as possible:

- Fast-track the implementation of the proposed wireless spectrum auctions to increase the availability of faster high speed wireless Internet service.
- Promote private investment in broadband through corporate incentives such as the approval of the AT&T/T-Mobile merger which will bring state-of-the-art wireless broadband investment to more than 97% of Americans without increasing the deficit or spending taxpayer money.
- Speed up the overhaul of the Universal Service Fund to facilitate the rapid expansion of broadband service to high cost areas.
- Support projects that will implement broadband more aggressively in the healthcare industry and in our nation’s energy grids to drive down costs for consumers.

“The National Broadband Plan is a historic initiative that will be the largest stimulus to our economy and to Interstate commerce since President Eisenhower created the Interstate Highway system,” said Watkins. “In addition, it will provide everyone with rich educational opportunities

-- opportunities that would otherwise be closed to many urban, rural and other underserved communities. It is critical that these steps be taken to ensure that there is no delay in getting the benefits of this life changing plan out to the people that need it most.”

MAADD's petition can be viewed online here.

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About MAADD

The Ministerial Alliance Against the Digital Divide (MAADD) is a 175,000+ next generation civil rights organization led by ministers devoted to bridging the Digital Divide and promoting personal and economic development in low-income and minority communities across the country.