

Statement of  
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FCC En Banc Hearing  
Broadband and the Digital Future  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
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Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Marge Krueger. I am Administrative Assistant for the Communications Workers of America District 13, which covers Pennsylvania and Delaware. CWA represents 700,000 employees nationwide. Here in the Pittsburgh area, CWA represents communications workers at Verizon, Comcast, and AT&T Mobility, and in rural Pennsylvania, we have members at Embarq, Windstream, and Citizens.

Our members' future depends on the speed of deployment of high-capacity networks in America. Without world-class networks, our members' careers -- and the livelihoods of their families -- will stagnate and decline. Indeed, our entire economy depends upon high-speed networks for economic development and job growth. Broadband is the critical infrastructure of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. High-speed Internet provides access to unlimited information for ourselves and our children, and enables improvements in health care, education, public safety, citizen engagement, and even new ways to address global warming.

Recognizing the vital importance of high-capacity networks, CWA last year launched our Speed Matters: High Speed Internet for America campaign.

Unfortunately, our nation has fallen behind in the deployment and adoption of high-speed networks. You've heard the dismal statistics: the U.S. is now 15<sup>th</sup> in the world in household broadband penetration. Moreover, there's a very real digital divide. If you're poor or live in a rural area, you're only half as likely to subscribe to broadband as those with higher-incomes or those who live in urban or suburban communities.

In addition, there's a serious speed gap. Over the past two years, CWA has posted a speed test on our speedmatters.org website which allows people to see the upload and download speeds of their Internet connection. Last year, the average download speed in the U.S. was 1.9 megabits per second. Contrast that to Japan. There, the average Internet download speed is 30 times faster, and people pay about the same for that ultra high-speed connection as we in America pay for our DSL or cable modem.

CWA is currently crunching the data for its 2008 speed report, which will be released in August. The CWA national office provided me with the 2008 data and map for Pennsylvania. The average download speed in Pennsylvania in 2008 was 2.4 megabits per second, and the average upload speed was only 504 kilobits per second. That's slow – too slow for medical monitoring at home or videoconferencing. But what's even more troubling is the distribution across the state. We plotted the median download speed by zip code. The average download speed in huge parts of rural central Pennsylvania is too slow to classify as broadband, according to the FCC's new definition of 768 kilobits per second downstream.

The fastest download speeds in Pennsylvania are concentrated in the suburban areas around Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Harrisburg. There Verizon is building FiOS, and in response Comcast and the other cable companies are upgrading their networks to compete. This competition is good for consumers, and it is good for workers – good for workers, I would add, so long as companies respect workers’ rights, and compete based on service and innovation, and not lower labor costs and trampling workers’ rights to join a union.

The Pennsylvania maps indicate that we cannot rely on market forces alone to build-out high-speed broadband networks. There is a critical role for government – in partnership with the private sector – to ensure that every family, community, and business has affordable access to this critical technology.

That’s why we’re working hard in the Pennsylvania legislature to pass a bill to set up a public-private partnership to create a broadband map, and establish local community teams to stimulate broadband build-out and demand. We’re also hopeful the Congress will pass its broadband mapping bill to help Pennsylvania and other states fund such efforts. We see an important role for the FCC in these mapping efforts. Looking further ahead, we’ll need to reform our universal service system to support broadband deployment. We need to look at targeted tax subsidies – that’s how Japan built its near universal fiber to the home network. There’s also a role for programs such as distribution of free or low-cost computers to low-income children.

Finally, we must preserve an open Internet. Everyone should be able to go where they want and upload what they want when they want on the Internet. We urge you to take strong

enforcement action against any Internet provider that blocks consumer access to legal content, particularly without telling their customers. This will preserve an open Internet, while recognizing the need for reasonable network management.

Speed Matters on the Internet. CWA looks forward to working with you and other policymakers to make this happen. Thank you.