

# HIGH SPEED INTERNET

## AND THE ENVIRONMENT



### OVERVIEW

Making affordable high speed Internet accessible to everyone creates many solutions to America's growing energy problems. Broadband reduces our carbon footprint while promising substantial economic pay-offs. By including universally accessible, high speed Internet as an essential part of our energy plan, the United States can build a green economy, greatly reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, and spur economic growth by creating new environmental jobs.

### CURRENT CHALLENGES

Unfortunately, many Americans do not realize that high speed Internet enables solutions to many of our most challenging environmental problems. Although the U.S. consumes more energy than any other country, we trail behind many industrialized nations in broadband proliferation. As one of the world's biggest polluters, the environmental benefits of high-speed Internet cannot be fully realized while approximately 20 million Americans (six to eight million households) currently lack access to broadband and millions more are priced out of the market.

### BENEFITS OF HIGH SPEED INTERNET

- Broadband supports sustainable economic development in rural communities. When high speed Internet gets to small towns like Diller, NE local businesses can thrive – for example Blue Valley Meats in Diller experienced a 30 percent growth in business and doubled its employee ranks in the last 5 years as a result of building the website and reaching new consumers. Broadband helps build sustainable communities across America by reducing barriers of distance and the need to travel.
- A study by the American Consumer Institute found that the U.S. could achieve a net reduction of 1 billion tons of

greenhouse gas over 10 years, which if converted into energy saved, would constitute 11 percent of annual U.S. oil imports if we invested in broadband-enabled energy efficiency.

- Telemedicine, long-distance and business communication programs, and e-commerce are all high speed Internet-based applications that replace basic everyday carbon-intensive activities with carbon-neutral alternatives. The Climate Group finds that broadband-enabled travel substitution could save \$20-\$40 billion annually in gross fuel savings in the U.S. by 2020.
- Implementing smart grid in a manner consistent with programs that assist workers in the industry to adjust to new technologies will power the global 21st century economy. The U.S. could achieve energy savings equivalent to eliminating greenhouse gas emissions from 53 million cars by improving the efficiency of the power grid by just 5 percent. The Networking the Green Economy report projects that smart grid technologies would reduce power disturbances across the U.S. and save the economy \$49 billion per year.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Programs to support investment in smart grid, smart meters and smart appliances will increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gases.
- Policy makers focus on delivering one gigabyte of capacity to institutions that anchor our communities – libraries, schools and hospitals – to promote sustainable communities in which all Americans will benefit from the build out of a high speed broadband infrastructure.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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