



For Immediate Release

Contact: Tamara Straus, tamara.straus@cetfund.org

Mobile: 415-568-6594

Internet for All Now Coalition Sends 350,000 Emails to the FCC Demanding Lifeline Broadband for Low-Income Americans

San Francisco and Los Angeles, CA – March 4, 2016 – In advance of the Federal Communications Commission’s vote on March 31 on the Broadband Lifeline Program, the [Internet for All Now Coalition](#)—led by the California Emerging Technology Fund (CETF) and backed by the City, County and School Board of Los Angeles as well as dozens of other California public officials, school boards and community organizations—has sent more than 350,000 emails to the FCC demanding affordable, high-speed Internet service for eligible Americans. The Coalition’s chief message is that Internet access is a means to build an inclusive society and that access delayed is access denied.

Internet for All Now Coalition Demands

The Coalition’s five major recommendations are based on years of experience narrowing the Digital Divide in California from 45% in 2008 to 25% in 2015. The recommendations are *more specific* than those submitted by other groups, because the coalition finds there are three intertwined barriers to broadband adoption: (1) Cost, (2) Relevance and (3) Digital Literacy. As such, the Internet for All Now Coalition urges the FCC to require communication companies to:

1. Offer unbundled, high-speed Internet service with a Wi-Fi router in the range of \$10/month and not make consumers choose between telephone or broadband service.
2. Establish a streamlined national process to verify consumer Lifeline eligibility.
3. Capitalize an independent fund to provide grants to “trusted messengers,” such as libraries, schools and community-based organizations, for advertising, outreach and education.
4. Authorize and encourage states to implement their own broadband Lifeline programs.
5. Use a performance-based and results-oriented approach with specific numeric goals for broadband adoption monitored by an oversight advisory council.

State of the Digital Divide

Although progress has been made on closing the Digital Divide, the stakes for the unconnected have grown much higher. It is nearly impossible to find or apply for jobs or do school homework without high-speed Internet. Pew Research Center reports that [more than one fifth](#) of American households still go without home broadband. A [June 2015 CETF/The Field Poll study](#) found that 21% of Californians still lack a broadband connection at home. The vast majority (77%) of respondents to the poll said the cost of high-speed Internet—\$40-\$50 per month—puts the 21st-Century right to online information around education, employment, and healthcare out of reach. The California populations reporting the lowest levels of home broadband connectivity are: households whose total annual income is less than \$20,000 (65%); adults who have not graduated

from high school (52%); seniors age 65 or older (57%); adults who identify having a disability (59%); and Spanish-speaking Latinos (63%).

What is Lifeline?

Since 1985, Lifeline has provided a discount on landline phone service for qualifying low-income Americans to ensure they can connect to jobs, family and emergency services. In 2014, Lifeline served 12 million people by providing telecom or mobile companies a \$9.25-a-month, per customer subsidy. Lifeline is part of the Universal Service Fund of the FCC, and is capitalized through surcharge on landline telephone customers' bills (coming to a few cents a month per customer). To participate in Lifeline, consumers must either have an income that is at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Line or participate in a variety of federal assistance programs.

Internet for All Now Endorsements

The Coalition's position on Broadband Lifeline has been endorsed by dozens of California State public officials, such as President Pro Tempore Kevin de Leon (Los Angeles) and Assembly Speaker Elect Anthony Rendon (Los Angeles) and Mayor Eric Garcetti, and dozens of nonprofit and community-based organizations, such as the California Center for Rural Policy and the Latino Community Foundation, among others. The full list of endorsements is attached.

About Internet for All Now

Internet for All Now is a campaign of the California Emerging Technology Fund. Established in 2007 by the California Public Utilities Commission as a result of two corporate mergers, CETF works to close the Digital Divide in California. For more information, please visit internetforallnow.org and www.cetfund.org.

Available for Interviews

[Sunne Wright McPeak](#), President and CEO, California Emerging Technology Fund

[Susan Walters](#), Senior Vice President, California Emerging Technology Fund

Any of the public officials and nonprofit leaders who have endorsed the Coalition's proposal

Contact Tamara Straus, tamara.straus@cetfund.org, 415-568-6594