

Published in *The Hill* in September of 2009

Investing in Anchor Institutions

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Sound familiar? For many of us, high-speed broadband access is something we have at work, and at our homes. But for millions of Americans, broadband access is either unavailable or unaffordable.

Broadband access provides supportive technology for households, schools, libraries, and health facilities in my hometown of Sacramento and in communities across the country. In the current economic climate, more and more hard working families need access to the internet to find a new job, manage their finances during this difficult period, obtain news alerts, and apply to college. And it is important that we continue to fund anchor institutions in underserved areas to help our communities grow.

That's why I have urged the Obama Administration to prioritize funding for broadband infrastructure made possible by the Recovery Act for essential "anchor institutions" - the schools, libraries and community centers that provide access to the internet for Americans all across the country.

Last week I sent a letter with my colleagues Anna Eshoo and Ed Markey to the NTIA to help ensure our concerns are addressed. Anchor institutions are essential to providing broadband access to unserved and underserved populations unable to maintain computer service in individual homes because of financial or technological impediments. Anchor institutions allow lower-income Americans, especially in urban areas, greater access to broadband technology at little or no cost.

Building high-capacity broadband pipes will have transformative impacts on local communities. It will create jobs, allow our children to obtain a better education, deliver high-quality health care at a lower cost, improve job-training centers, and enhance public safety. Bringing high-capacity broadband to schools and libraries will also help strengthen our communities, and provide access to broadband to those Americans who need it most.