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Congresswoman Matsui's Broadband Affordability Act Receives Key Endorsement from CWA

WASHINGTON, DC - Today, Representative Doris O. Matsui (CA-05) announced that the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the United Auto Workers (UAW) have formally endorsed the Broadband Affordability Act of 2009, which Rep. Matsui introduced in the House of Representatives in September. The bill directs the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to establish a broadband program that provides low-income Americans living in rural and urban areas with assistance in subscribing to affordable broadband internet service.

"Universal, affordable access to high-speed communications networks is as essential today as is access to voice communications," said Alan Reuther, Director of CWA-UAW Alliance. "Enactment of H.R. 3646 would help to ensure that every American has access to all the promises of the information age. This would reduce the digital divide that currently excludes low income persons, including many minorities, from having access to broadband service. This legislation is especially important in light of the current economic climate, in which many hard working Americans simply cannot afford to pay up to \$60 a month to receive broadband service."

"I truly appreciate the support of CWA-UAW in this effort," said Congresswoman Matsui. "The letter from the alliance to Chairmen Waxman and Boucher helps illustrate the importance of this legislation. Americans increasingly rely on the internet for education, health care, to manage their finances, and to seek and apply for employment. We need swift action to ensure that Americans have access to affordable broadband services."

The Broadband Affordability Act is intended to model the assistance provided for basic telephone service under the FCC's current Lifeline Assistance program, which is designed to ensure that quality telecommunications services are available to low-income customers at just, reasonable, and affordable rates. Rep. Matsui's proposal would expand the USF Lifeline Assistance program to allow USF funds to be used to offer discounted internet service to

lower-income consumers residing in urban and rural areas. Lifeline customers would simply receive a discount on their monthly broadband service bill.

Under the current program, there are stringent federal eligibility requirements that households have to meet to qualify for low income support. Households would be eligible for Lifeline Assistance if he or she participates in one of the following programs: Federal Public House Assistance or Section 8; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as Food Stamps; Low Income Energy Assistance Program; Medicaid; National School Lunch Program; Supplemental Security Income; and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. In addition, a household may be eligible if the household income is at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines.

"Moving forward, I believe it is critically important that we address affordability of internet access for all," stated Matsui. "My Broadband Affordability Act will truly help close the digital divide for millions of Americans. Now is the time to provide greater access to broadband services for all Americans, and this legislation directs broadband subscription discounts to the Americans who need it most, when they need it most."

CWA, America's largest communications and media union, represents over 700,000 men and women in both private and public sectors, including over half a million workers who are building the Information Highway. CWA members are employed in telecommunications, broadcasting, cable TV, journalism, publishing, electronics, general manufacturing, and other fields.

A copy of the endorsement letter from CWA-UWA can be found here: [cwa-uaw letter in support of broadband affordability](#)

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