



Media Advisory

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**MMTC REPORT CALLS FOR TELECOM POLICYMAKERS TO
MAKE BROADBAND ADOPTION THEIR TOP PRIORITY**

WASHINGTON, DC (November 21, 2013) – A report released today by the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council (MMTC) maintains that current public policy debates on Internet regulation, particularly net neutrality, have diverted attention from the broadband adoption crisis affecting people of color. The report is co-authored by David Honig, president of MMTC, and Dr. Nicol Turner-Lee, vice president and chief research and policy officer at MMTC.

The report, “Refocusing Broadband Policy: The New Opportunity Agenda for People of Color,” explores current trends in minority broadband adoption and use and assesses how current debates on Internet regulation are supporting or detracting from strategies to close the digital divide. The report outlines a new approach to broadband policy that includes modernizing the E-rate program and using broadband to transform education, facilitating universal telemedicine and mobile health innovation, expanding digital employment and entrepreneurship for people of color, and rolling back the regressive taxation of wireless services and e-commerce that hinders broadband adoption and use. According to the report, these areas are ripe for narrowly tailored policy interventions that, if properly calibrated, can deliver significant benefits for people of color who are still not fully engaged online.

According to the report, African Americans and Hispanics are still under-adopting broadband, despite slight increases in minority broadband adoption over the last few years. While the use of mobile broadband has increased, especially through smartphones, limited digital literacy skills and the lack of relevance of the Internet to their daily lives have stalled broadband use for African Americans and Hispanics even though broadband is more readily available at lower price points. In an historical review of broadband policies initiated under the leadership of former FCC Chairman William Kennard, the authors suggest that innovation has thrived within a minimalist regulatory framework facilitating technological advances and opportunities for consumers and entrepreneurs of color. With adoption gaps between African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites still persisting, the authors caution against stringent regulation until more of these communities are enabled by the platforms, products, and services that broadband provides.

“It’s important that policymakers, the private sector, and community advocates include the importance of closing the digital divide in broader conversations around the future of the Internet,” said Dr. Turner-Lee. “Current policy debates tend to be more focused on picking winners and losers, and have minimized the enormously complex task of connecting and serving the unconnected.”

“People of color have long been committed to advocacy in this space, and have strived for an open Internet,” said Honig. “We want this paper to highlight that first class digital citizenship for people of color should be a shared goal, and emphasize that more regulation is not always the silver bullet for advancing digital inclusion.”

The full report can be downloaded from MMTC’s website (www.mmtconline.org).

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About MMTC:

The Minority Media and Telecommunications Council (MMTC) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving equal opportunity and civil rights in the mass media, telecommunications and broadband industries, and closing the digital divide. MMTC is generally recognized as the nation’s leading advocate for minority advancement in communications.