

## Senator Amy Klobuchar

Hi. I'm Senator Amy Klobuchar from the State of Minnesota, and I want to thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important conference, if only by video. I welcome you to our state, the State of Minnesota, where, in the words of our unofficial poet laureate, Garrison Keillor, "the women are strong, the men are good-looking, and all the journalists are above average."

The issues you are addressing in these three days represent a continuation of that tradition of feisty, independent and good journalism. They go to the very core of our democracy. I know you're going to hear from my friend, Byron Dorgan. I was proud to join him on the recent Senate Resolution criticizing the FCC on the issue of media cross-ownership. *[Applause.]*

I understand you'll also be discussing Net neutrality. And as a member of the Senate Commerce Committee, I know how important that is. The Internet has a potential to be a great democratizing force for the free and robust flow of information, and fair and open access to the Internet is vital to a good democratic discussion and an incredibly important exchange of ideas.

I also hope you'll consider an issue that I've worked on: consumer rights in the wireless telecom industry. I've authored a cell phone bill of rights that would give consumers a level playing field against the handful of giant companies that now dominate the industry.

It would require cell phone companies to prorate their early termination fees so that consumers have real choice in the marketplace, and can change providers when they're dissatisfied with their current provider. *[Applause.]* It would also require cell phone companies to give customers full and accurate information about service quality, and requiring that billing information be clear and easy to read.

Finally, it calls for a study of a way to end handset locking, so that consumers will have more choice of technology and software on the phones they've purchased. *[Applause.]*

I mention all of this because I think it has important implications for communication in the future. A few years ago, cell phones were just phones. Then they became cameras and devices for text messaging. Now they're turning into the next generation of portable computers, the device that people use to get news and exchange opinions. I'm determined to make sure that the wireless market will work for consumers, not against them, and the time to start is now. So I support and respect your role as watchdogs. As a daughter of a journalist, I would catch enormous grief if I didn't.

As you embark on this journey today, a lengthy discourse on the value of information in free society, remember the wisdom handed down from the Ojibwa people, many of whom live in Minnesota. Their philosophy told them that the decisions of great leaders are not made for today's generation, but for children seven generations from now. Keep that wisdom in mind as you debate issues that sometimes seem esoteric to the general

public. But I think you understand the importance of a free and open media; how important it is to have watchdogs of our democracy.

Our generation and the next generations are counting on you. Thank you very much, and enjoy your time in Minnesota.