Gigi Sohn for A Proactive, Consumer-Focused Federal Communications Commission

On October 26, 2021, President Joe Biden nominated Gigi Sohn to fill the fifth seat at the FCC. The five-member commission has been stuck in a 2-2 split since January. The agency has a tremendous amount of work before it, and leaving it less than fully operational limits its capacity to most effectively and proactively:

- Finish updating the FCC’s broadband maps to ensure the billions of dollars appropriated by Congress in the bipartisan infrastructure bill are distributed equitably and to areas that need it most;
- Restore the agency’s authority to regulate broadband under Title II of the Communications Act and restore net neutrality rules;
- Strengthen programs created to ensure low-income people can afford communications services, like Lifeline and the Affordable Connectivity Program;
- Create rules to ensure our nation’s communications networks are more reliable and resilient to natural disasters, the climate crisis, and other threats;
- Halt the dangerous trend of increased consolidation and monopolization within the broadcast and telecommunications sectors, and much more.

The Senate must provide the FCC with a governing majority by confirming Sohn without delay.

Background

- Sohn has over 30 years of experience working on communications policy, and she has a demonstrated track-record of bringing together varied stakeholders in bipartisan coalitions to fight for equitable broadband policy, consumer protections, competition and the open-internet. Her experience would make her an asset at the agency as it works to implement the mandates of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.
- She served as a top aide to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler. During her time at the agency, the FCC adopted the only net neutrality rules that have withstood legal challenges to their statutory authority, modernized the Lifeline program, adopted strong privacy rules for broadband providers and more.
- Sohn helped found and lead a non-profit focused on promoting an open and competitive communications and technology market.

Organizational Support

- More than 200 organizations — including civil rights, community media, media justice, workers rights and consumer advocacy groups, companies and trade associations — from across the political spectrum have sent letters (attached) to the Senate calling for her swift confirmation.
- Sohn has received support from right-wing outlets that appreciate her work fighting to curb the power of broadcast and cable incumbents and ensure competition in the media.

Grassroots Support

- More than 110,000 people have signed petitions calling for Sohn’s confirmation since October.
- Almost a quarter million activists have called for the FCC to gain a governing majority since January 2021.
The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Senate Minority Leader  
317 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation  
512 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation  
512 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

November 30, 2021

Dear Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker,

We are writing to urge the swift and concurrent confirmation of Jessica Rosenworcel and Gigi Sohn for the Federal Communications Commission and Alan Davidson for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. These agencies urgently need Senate-confirmed leaders to address the critical need for affordable and resilient access to the open internet in the midst of a global pandemic and worsening climate crisis. Through bipartisan infrastructure legislation, Congress has given these agencies enormous tasks on tight deadlines. These exceptional nominees’ appointments so late in the year means there can be no delay in confirming them and getting started in earnest on all of that urgent work.

These three nominees each bring decades of experience, a commitment to the public interest, and the skills necessary to fulfill the missions of these agencies.

Jessica Rosenworcel’s tenure at the FCC makes her an exceptional pick for FCC Chair. She is a respected and principled advocate with a proven record of fighting for the public interest. She has long championed efforts to ensure everyone in America, particularly schoolchildren, have affordable and reliable high-speed broadband to provide them with the tools they need for a successful future. Chairwoman Rosenworcel’s efforts to close the “homework gap” embody that commitment. As Acting Chair, she quickly and successfully launched the Emergency Broadband Benefit, a program that is now helping millions of Americans afford access to the internet.

For over 30 years, Gigi Sohn’s priority has been ensuring that modern communications networks are available to everybody, regardless of who they are or where they live. Her life’s work has embodied the standard on which the FCC bases its decisions: the public interest. She served as a top aide to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler and helped found and lead a non-profit focused on promoting an open and competitive communications and technology market. She has a proven record of bringing together varied stakeholders, including public interest advocates and companies, in bipartisan coalitions to fight for equitable broadband policies, consumer protections, competition and the open internet.
Alan Davidson has over 20 years of experience in government, industry and public interest advocacy, making him an ideal candidate to take up the interagency work of the NTIA, and to guide not only NTIA’s existing spectrum allocation and broadband policy work, but also its greatly increased grantmaking and coordinating role in implementation of the bipartisan infrastructure bill’s broadband funding provisions.

Even before the pandemic struck over 21 months ago, 2019 Census data showed that nearly 80 million people in the U.S. did not have adequate broadband at home.\(^1\) According to that data, poor families and people of color are disproportionately disconnected — only 48 percent of low-income households had a fixed broadband connection at that time, and 13 million Black people, 18 million Latinx people and 1.3 million Indigenous people lacked this kind of adequate home connectivity.\(^2\) Digital divide indicators like education and income disparities demonstrate that many Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities and ethnic groups are also disproportionately impacted, and some AAPI communities and individuals with reduced English proficiency levels may adopt broadband at lower rates than the national average.\(^3\)

At the same time communities across the country are facing more frequent extreme weather events due to the climate crisis, and those events are taking down crucial communications infrastructure on an increasingly regular basis.

And while Congress passed historic legislation to address broadband affordability and accessibility for both urban and rural communities in the midst of the pandemic, the FCC and NTIA’s ability to administer these Congressional directives — as well as their ability to promote affordability, competition, privacy, sound spectrum policy, and network resiliency along with other consumer protections using existing authorities — has been limited by the deadlocked FCC and the lack of an Assistant Secretary at NTIA.

Any delay in confirming all three of these nominees will stall progress on achieving those goals and ensuring that everyone in the United States is able to access robust, affordable high-speed internet.

We urge you to confirm these three public-interest champions before the Senate recesses at the end of the year. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

18 Million Rising
Access Humboldt
Akaku Maui Community Media
Alliance for Community Media
American Library Association
Appalshop Community Media Initiative

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\(^1\) See Comments of Free Press, FCC GN Docket No. 20-269, at 4 (filed Sept. 18, 2020),

\(^2\) See id.

\(^3\) See Asian Americans Advancing Justice, Telecommunications and Technology Fact Sheet,
Native Public Media
Newark for Educational Equity & Diversity
The New Hampshire Coalition for Community Media
North Shore TV
NTEN
OD Action
The OMNI Centre for Public Media, Inc.
OMNI Productions
Open MIC (Open Media and Information Companies Initiative)
Open Technology Institute
OpenMedia
Orion Neighborhood Television (ONTV)
The Other 98%
Our Revolution
PhillyCAM
Presente.org
Progress America
Public Knowledge
Revolving Door Project
RootsAction.org
Salem Community Television, Salem NH
Salina Media Connection; Community Access TV of Salina, Inc.,
San Diego Futures Foundation
Tahoe Truckee Media
Telecommunications for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Inc. (TDI)
TURN - The Utility Reform Network
United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry
Valley Shore Community Television Inc.
Western New York Library Resources Council
Winchester Community Access & Media, Inc.
Writers Guild of America West
X-Lab
November 16, 2021

SUPPORT SWIFT CONFIRMATION OF ROSENWORCEL, SOHN TO FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

Senator Maria Cantwell  
Chair  
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Roger Wicker  
Ranking Member  
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 230 national organizations to promote and protect the rights of all persons in the United States, and the undersigned organizations, we write to convey our strong support for the nominations of Jessica Rosenworcel and Gigi B. Sohn to serve as chair and commissioner, respectively, of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). We urge the committee to report the nominations to the full Senate favorably and promptly. At a time when access to reliable, diverse news and information, as well as affordable broadband and communications, is paramount, a fully staffed FCC is a top priority for the nation and for the constituencies we represent. Both Ms. Rosenworcel and Ms. Sohn are exemplary nominees for their respective positions and should be swiftly confirmed.

Universal and affordable access to telecommunications services and diverse media enables vital communications with family, friends, and employers; provides access to invaluable health information, emergency services, social services, and education; and promotes participation in our 21st century democracy and economy. Our coalition is committed to ensuring that media and telecommunications policy affirms and extends our nation’s longstanding commitment to civil rights.

Ms. Rosenworcel’s direct experience with the commission, which includes nine years at the agency, and most recently as acting chair, demonstrates she is particularly well-positioned to lead the FCC at this pivotal time. Under her leadership, the FCC successfully implemented several time-sensitive and nationally important programs to address the COVID-19 pandemic, including the Emergency Broadband Benefit, which offers monthly financial
support to low-income households. Throughout her career, Ms. Sohn has dedicated herself to the public interest, whether through her service on the Presidential Advisory Commission on the Public Interest Obligations of Digital Television Broadcasters, her advocacy for policies that promote diversity and competition in the non-profit sector, or her time at the FCC as a senior counselor to the chairman.

Both nominees have shown they will establish a collaborative process and dialogue with the civil rights community as well as consult with the community members who are often left out of commission deliberations, including people of color, people with disabilities, low-income communities, incarcerated individuals, and other marginalized communities. In addition, both nominees would bring diversity to the commission. If confirmed, Ms. Rosenworcel would be the FCC’s first permanent female chair and Ms. Sohn would be the commission’s first openly LGBTQ commissioner.

Without confirmation of both nominees to these positions this year, the FCC will be left with only three commissioners. The need for swift action on these nominations is therefore critical. After nine months without a working majority, the FCC has a significant workload before it. The civil rights agenda at the FCC requires rapid, focused attention. Congress has now adopted the Affordable Connectivity Program, an improved, permanent version of the Emergency Broadband Benefit, and the commission will need to move quickly to implement this program and ensure that all the commission’s programs for low-income people are more effective and easier for their beneficiaries to use. Other civil rights priorities include finishing the congressionally mandated 2018 Quadrennial Review this year; completing the next review that will start immediately in 2022; implementing Congress’ directive to collect equal employment opportunity data in this sector; and a long-delayed proceeding addressing the dysfunctional market and unjust practices in incarcerated communications.

There is a tremendous overlap between media and telecommunications policies and civil rights, and the FCC’s leaders must apply that understanding in setting the commission’s agenda. To that end, we urge the committee to discuss with the nominees the importance of placing civil rights at the center of the commission’s agenda and to press them to create an Office of Civil Rights to ensure every aspect of the agency’s docket is consistent with our nation’s highest values. Moreover, the FCC is in a unique position to address privacy in the industries it oversees. Processing of personal data should promote equity and justice as it enhances safety, economic opportunity, and convenience for all.

Ms. Rosenworcel and Ms. Sohn are highly qualified, possess deep knowledge of the challenges faced by disadvantaged populations, and have a demonstrated commitment to collaboration with civil rights stakeholders. For these reasons, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation should move quickly to report these nominees favorably to the full Senate. Should you have any questions, please contact Leadership Conference Media/Telecommunications Task Force Co-Chair Cheryl Leanza, United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry, at cleanza@alhmail.com or Bertram Lee, Jr., media/tech counsel, at lee@civilrights.org.

Sincerely,
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
A. Philip Randolph Institute
AFL-CIO
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers
Andrew Goodman Foundation, Inc.
Asian Americans Advancing Justice - AAJC
Center for Disability Rights
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Communications Workers of America
Crescent City Media Group
Equality California
Feminist Majority Foundation
Hispanic Federation
Japanese American Citizens League
League of Conservation Voters
MediaJustice
National Black Justice Coalition
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans
National Fair Housing Alliance
Public Advocacy for Kids (PAK)
Public Citizen
Silver State Equality-Nevada
Southern Echo Inc.
The Trevor Project
United Church of Christ Media Justice Ministry
November 15, 2021

Senator Maria Cantwell  
Chair  
Senate Commerce Committee  
United States Senate  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Roger Wicker  
Ranking Member  
Senate Commerce Committee  
United States Senate  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker,

On behalf of the Schools, Health & Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition, the National Digital Inclusion Alliance (NDIA), and the undersigned organizations, we write to express our strong support for Jessica Rosenworcel to serve as the Chair of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), Gigi Sohn to serve as a Commissioner on the FCC, and Alan Davidson to serve as the Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

The SHLB Coalition is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit advocacy organization that strives to close the digital divide by promoting open, affordable, high-quality broadband for anchor institutions and their communities. SHLB has over 300 members from across the US, including hundreds of commercial and nonprofit organizations who support our mission.

NDIA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and advances digital equity by supporting community programs and equipping policymakers to act. Working collaboratively with digital inclusion practitioners, NDIA advocates for broadband access, tech devices, digital skills training, and tech support. NDIA currently represents 625 affiliate organizations located in 46 states.

We urge the Senate Commerce Committee to advance the nomination of Rosenworcel for an additional term without delay. Her impressive range of work and extensive experience as a commissioner on the FCC makes her well suited to serve as its chair. She is committed to closing the “homework gap” and has overseen the rollout and implementation of several critical federal programs that make technology more accessible and affordable for Americans, including the Emergency Broadband Benefit program and the Emergency Connectivity Fund — the most significant federal programs yet to address internet affordability. By taking a lead role on spectrum policy reforms and expanding affordable broadband access to households, schools, libraries, and healthcare providers, Rosenworcel has demonstrated outstanding leadership as acting FCC Chair.
We also urge the Senate Commerce Committee to advance the nomination of Sohn for Commissioner on the FCC without delay. Sohn has been a long-time advocate for internet freedom, consumer protection, and digital inclusivity. Though steadfast in her principles, she has a deep and realistic understanding of the digital marketplace and its practical and economic challenges. In turn, she recognizes the need to work with others from all sides of every issue to achieve a more open, affordable, and privacy-protective communications landscape. Accordingly, she is well-respected by technology policy stakeholders on both sides of the political aisle as well as by for-profit and nonprofit institutions. Sohn possesses an unmatched level of knowledge, leadership, and experience in her field, making her extremely well qualified to serve as an FCC Commissioner.

Finally, we urge the Senate Commerce Committee to advance the nomination of Davidson for Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Administrator of NTIA without delay. Given his vast expertise in technology policy and digital access issues, Davidson will be a steady and effective leader at the NTIA. He has worked in policy areas such as free expression, content regulation, encryption, and copyright, while maintaining a commitment to the public interest. His experience and skills make him well suited for his prospective role at the NTIA.

The FCC and NTIA have and will continue to play an extremely important role in digital policy — particularly given the passing of the Infrastructure Expansion Act of 2021 and the growing influx of federal money for broadband and digital inclusion programs. As such, strong and effective leadership at the FCC and NTIA is crucial to ensuring a more efficient and equitable digital future for America. We thus urge the Senate Commerce Committee to promptly confirm the nominations of Rosenworcel for FCC Chair, Sohn for FCC Commissioner, and Davidson for NTIA Assistant Secretary of Commerce and NTIA Administrator.

Thank you,

Valerie Oliver  
Alaska State Library

Mike Wassenaar  
Alliance for Community Media

Alan Inouye  
American Library Association

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American Library Association
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<td>Pacific Northwest Gigapop</td>
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<td>Partners Bridging the Digital Divide</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jenna Leventoff</td>
<td>Public Knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marci L. White</td>
<td>Redbud Telecom Consulting</td>
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<td>Jesse Bradley</td>
<td>Right Here, Right Now Project</td>
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<td>John Windhausen</td>
<td>Schools, Health &amp; Libraries Broadband (SHLB) Coalition</td>
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<td>Clayton Banks</td>
<td>Silicon Harlem</td>
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<td>Jeannene Hurley</td>
<td>Sound E-rate, Inc.</td>
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<td>Coree Kelly</td>
<td>Southern Oregon Education Service District</td>
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Julia Fallon  
State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA)  

Andy Stutzman  
Technology Learning Collaborative  

JJ McGrath  
Texoma Communications, LLC  

Samantha Schartman  
The Marconi Society  

Robert Plymale  
Thundercloud, Inc.  

Susan Benton  
Urban Libraries Council  

Roger Timmerman  
UTOPIA Fiber  

Jessamyn West  
Vermont Mutual Aid Society  

Kristen Perry  
Voqal  

Jennifer Evans  
West Hartford Community Interactive  

Tessa Michaelson Schmidt  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
November 17, 2021

Dear Senators Sinema and Kelly,

We write to convey the rapidly growing urgency to confirm Jessica Rosenworcel as the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) permanent chair and Gigi Sohn as a fifth commissioner. The FCC will have a 2-1 Republican majority if the Senate does not confirm Rosenworcel and Sohn by the end of the year. The Senate must act quickly.

Arizona needs a fully functional FCC to help close the digital divide, particularly acute in our state. In eight of Arizona’s fifteen counties, more than two-thirds of households lack access to high-speed broadband.¹ Low-income families, Native Americans, and people of color are disproportionately disconnected, compounding grave inequalities that were made worse during the pandemic.

Broadband access is a significant problem for families living on reservations in Arizona. Tribes are some of the least connected communities in the United States, and eighteen percent of tribal reservation residents have no internet access at home.² The 22 federally recognized Tribes in Arizona face unique connectivity challenges at a time when broadband access has proven essential for distance learning, telehealth appointments, meetings over video platforms, connecting to remote work, and much more.

Given the legislative calendar and the diminishing number of days for hearings and confirmation votes, we have reached a critical point to guarantee the agency charged with ensuring affordable communications access can do its work. Failing to confirm a permanent chair and a fifth commissioner leaves the FCC less than fully operational and limits its capacity to most effectively:

- Finish long-overdue reforms to the FCC’s outdated and inaccurate broadband maps, which are used to direct federal infrastructure investments;
- Strengthen the Lifeline program, which helps low-income households afford telephone and internet service;
- Create rules to make our nation’s communications networks more reliable and resilient to natural disasters and other threats;
- Guide the deployment of new broadband infrastructure built with federal dollars to make it as effective as possible;
- Protect consumers and workers from anticompetitive, job-killing mergers in the telecommunications sector;
- Approve emergency waivers for E-rate funded infrastructure to be opened up for remote education; and

• Meet the challenge of the 2018 Broadcast Ownership Quadrennial Review and halt the dangerous trend towards consolidated ownership in broadcasting by reasserting principles of localism, competition and ownership diversity.

The FCC has the singular ability to ensure affordable and reliable communications for all. The pandemic showed us the unshakable image of children doing their classwork from fast-food parking lots using borrowed WiFi. We cannot let those students or any family wait any longer. If we are to reach the goal of having a country where everyone, no matter their address or size of their bank account, has affordable access to high-speed internet, we need a full commission immediately. We urge Congress not to lose any more time and to confirm Jessica Rosenworcel and Gigi Sohn by the end of the year.

Sincerely,

Cat’s in the Cradle New Life Sanctuary
Common Sense
Gila River Telecommunications, Inc.
LISC Phoenix
Native Public Media
NTEN
Red Rock Mountain Studios LLC
Rural Arizona Action
Swinging Sixties Productions
Terabyte Media LLC
November 11, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chairwoman
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Recommendation for Confirmation of Nominated FCC Commissioners Jessica Rosenworcel and Gigi Sohn

Dear Chairwoman Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker:

The Rural Wireless Association (“RWA”)¹ is writing to recommend that the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation confirm the nomination of Jessica Rosenworcel as Chairwoman of the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC” or “Commission”) and move quickly to schedule a confirmation hearing for Gigi Sohn as an FCC Commissioner.

Both of these nominees are extremely qualified for their positions. As Acting Chair of the FCC for the past 9 months, Rosenworcel has been a good steward and a strong advocate for continued investment and innovation in wired and wireless broadband networks. Rosenworcel has also been supportive of Congress’ goal to build next generation networks in unserved and underserved areas and to close the digital divide. RWA believes that, with a fully staffed Commission, Rosenworcel can be instrumental in directing the Commission’s full attention towards building and maintaining networks in rural America to keep all Americans connected.

Ms. Sohn is also more than qualified to be confirmed as an FCC Commissioner. For over 30 years, Ms. Sohn has relentlessly served the public interest and helped to keep Big Tech in check. She is an advocate for all consumers, both urban and rural, and has worked tirelessly to close the digital divide and to ensure that diverse voices (including all rural stakeholders) are heard and protected. She previously served as an advisor to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler and in that role Ms. Sohn advised the chairman on a multitude of telecommunications, internet, and media issues. RWA has worked with Ms. Sohn on issues ranging from universal service reform to ensuring spectrum auctions are conducted in a manner that allows small and rural carriers to gain access to spectrum to serve rural communities. Ms. Sohn has worked with RWA to ensure that VoLTE roaming is implemented fairly so that rural consumers do not get left behind. Her nomination also speaks to President Biden’s desire to be inclusive and to promote diversity across all sectors of the federal government as Sohn will be the first openly LGBTQ+ Commissioner.

¹ RWA is a 501(c)(6) trade association dedicated to promoting wireless opportunities for rural telecommunications companies who serve consumers who, reside, work, or travel in rural America. RWA’s members are small businesses serving or seeking to serve secondary, tertiary, and rural markets. Each of RWA’s member companies serves fewer than 100,000 subscribers.
With the legislative calendar year coming to an end, it’s becoming more likely that the Commission will be shorthanded by the new year. Given the influx of broadband-related initiatives being passed and proposed by Congress, it is in the country’s best interest to keep the Commission functioning fully staffed with five commissioners. RWA eagerly awaits the confirmation of Rosenworcel as FCC Chairwoman and a scheduled date for Sohn’s confirmation hearing this year.

Respectfully submitted,

RURAL WIRELESS ASSOCIATION, INC.

By: /s/ Carri Bennet

_____________________________
Carri Bennet, General Counsel
Stephen Sharbaugh, Legislative and Policy Analyst
5185 MacArthur Blvd., NW, Suite 729
Washington, DC 20016
(202) 857-4519
legal@ruralwireless.org
November 4, 2021
The Honorable Roy Blunt
US Senate
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Re: FCC Nomination of Gigi Sohn

Dear Senator Blunt:

I am writing to express Socket Telecom's strong support for the nomination of Gigi Sohn to the Federal Communications Commission. Socket has a long history as a competitive telecom and Internet provider in Missouri, and Ms. Sohn has worked tirelessly throughout her entire career to advance competition and consumer choice in telecommunications and broadband.

The success of our company was made possible through the landmark and bipartisan Telecommunications Act of 1996. The Act's market-opening provisions allowed us to bring Missouri consumers and small businesses competitive options, pricing and service, many for the first time. In 2011, Socket began to expand its reach by building a brand new fiber-optic network to reach homes and businesses in rural Callaway County and Fulton. We have been expanding this fiber network ever since, now reaching 18 counties in Missouri, and as a result, thousands of customers now enjoy reliable, competitive high-speed internet service delivered over Socket's Fiber-Optic Network.

Today, Socket employs approximately 160 people, with offices across Missouri. We're proud to be Missouri's local competitive telecommunications provider, and we are working tirelessly to bring state-of-the-art technology and friendly, local support to as many homes and businesses as possible.

Gigi Sohn has been a friend to the competitive telecom and Internet industry. As a public interest and consumer advocate, she has been a steadfast champion for competition as the best path, and we have no doubt she will continue to do so at the Commission. It is critical for the Commission to have its full complement of Commissioners confirmed as soon as possible so that the issues in front of the FCC today—like broadband mapping—are implemented quickly to ensure that broadband funding goes to those areas that are most in need of new network deployment. This is an issue of significant importance as Socket has been seeking funding for Missouri communities that have been left behind.

We urge you to vote to confirm Gigi Sohn as Commissioner for the Federal Communications Commission. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Carson Coffman
President
Statement of Newsmax CEO Christopher Ruddy Re: FCC Nominations

In the past I have dealt with both Jessica Rosenworcel and Gigi Sohn on policy issues affecting the FCC and media and have found them to be fair-minded persons of strong integrity.

President Biden has nominated both to the FCC and I support their nominations.

Increasingly, independently operated cable news channels like Newsmax are being sidelined in favor of a small number of mega-corporations who dominate the channel line-ups, forcing upon consumers expensive and little-watched networks. It’s bad for the public interest and dangerous for democracy.

While I don’t always agree with the nominees on many policy matters, Newsmax fully supports the Commission’s mandate to promote diversity, localism and competition in the marketplace. Newsmax believes both nominees are committed to that mandate and I urge the Senate to confirm the nominations of Jessica Rosenworcel and Gigi Sohn.
On October 26, President Biden appointed Jessica Rosenworcel to Chair the Federal Communications Commission and Gigi Sohn to serve as the fifth Commissioner. NENA is proud to support both of their nominations. Nominees Rosenworcel and Sohn have shown deep dedication to improving the 9-1-1 emergency system and a commitment to public safety during their careers. NENA appreciates their tremendous leadership and encourages the Committee and Senate to vote in support of both their nominations.

As Acting Chair, Jessica Rosenworcel has been a champion for Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) and has worked tirelessly as Commissioner to help ensure FCC-regulated providers are capable of meeting the needs of public safety. In addition to pushing for improved requirements and industry accountability in carrying out the requirements of Kari’s Law and RAY BAUM’S Act, she has been an indefatigable champion for improved network resiliency and supported essential federal funding for the NG9-1-1 transition.

During Gigi Sohn’s tenure at the FCC, her work not only improved requirements for 9-1-1 caller location accuracy, but also requirements for text-to-9-1-1 — an essential tool for millions of Americans in need every day. Her work also helped elevate the need to tackle issues of funding and deploying NG9-1-1 in public-safety answering points nationwide. We look forward to working with Sohn as she advances the Commission’s work to fund “middle mile” internet infrastructure that will serve as an essential foundation to ensure underserved and rural communities have access to NG9-1-1.

We at NENA look forward to working with both nominees on issues pressing to the public safety community.
November 30, 2021

Maria Cantwell  
Chairwoman  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Washington, DC 20515

Roger Wicker  
Ranking Republican  
Senate Committee on Commerce  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Cantwell and Ranking Republican Wicker,

The Alarm Industry Communications Committee (AICC) strongly supports the nominations of Jessica Rosenworcel as Chairwoman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Gigi Sohn for FCC commissioner.

Based upon our observations and experiences in working with both nominees, we have found them to fully understand and recognize the key role that telecommunications plays in helping to ensure public safety. They have both proven to be very accessible and willing to listen and learn how issues before the FCC would impact the ability of alarm monitoring companies to respond to emergencies experienced by individuals and businesses as a result of a break in, fire, carbon monoxide incident or in the case of seniors a health emergency that requires the dispatch of emergency responders.

They have both demonstrated strong support for consumer rights while at the same time being willing to understand the concerns of the small business-dominated alarm industry which is a key partner in the public safety network. An added benefit is that they both have a long history of working on telecommunications issues both inside and outside the FCC, which would make them immediately ready to address the myriad of issues before the Commission.

We urge the Senate to expeditiously take up and confirm the nominations of both these highly qualified candidates.

Sincerely,

Lou Fiore  
Chairman Alarm Industry Communications Committee

Contact Bill Signer at signer@carmengroup.com or at (202) 515-2345 with questions.
December 10, 2021

Senator Maria Cantwell
Chair; U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Senator Roger Wicker
Ranking Member; U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker,

As President and CEO of the LGBTQ Victory Institute, I write to support Gigi Sohn in their candidacy to serve as FCC Commissioner within the Biden-Harris Administration.

Victory Institute works to achieve and sustain global LGBTQ equality through leadership development, training, and convening to increase the number, expand the diversity, and ensure the success of openly LGBTQ elected and appointed officials at all levels of government.

Through her 30+ years of work in the non-profit sector and as Counselor to former FCC Chair Tom Wheeler, Gigi has demonstrated her dedication to ensuring that every American household has affordable and robust broadband Internet. We have worked closely with Gigi Sohn in the past; much of the work we do at the LGBTQ Victory Institute would not be possible without partners like Gigi in our federal government. In addition to skillfully advancing America’s interests, Gigi Sohn also proudly represents the LGBTQ community. Gigi would be the first openly LGBTQ+ Commissioner of the FCC. There have been only a handful of openly LGBTQ+ Commissioners of independent agencies history.

We are thankful for Gigi’s continued service. We emphatically encourage the Biden-Harris Administration to move quickly to take advantage of Gigi’s exceptional experience and expertise, and continue to give effect to the President’s commitment that this Administration ‘look like America’.

I would be happy to further discuss with you Gigi Sohn’s impressive credentials.

Sincerely,

Mayor Annise Parker
President & CEO
December 10th, 2021

Senator Maria Cantwell
Chair, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Senator Roger Wicker
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker,

We represent a cross section of individuals and organizations that work to ensure freedom, justice and equality for LGBTQ+ people. We write to urge the swift confirmation of Gigi Sohn to serve as Commissioner on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

Through her 30+ years of work in the non-profit sector and as Counselor to former FCC Chair Tom Wheeler, Gigi has demonstrated her dedication to ensuring that every American household has affordable and robust broadband Internet. The importance of such access to the LGBTQ+ community cannot be overstated. The Internet has served as a vital lifeline to many in the community, particularly in those places where for cultural or other reasons, it may be difficult to be open about one’s orientation. The Internet has allowed LGBTQ+ people to find others like them, validating who they are and demonstrating that they are not alone.

Gigi would be the first openly LGBTQ+ Commissioner of the FCC. There have been only a handful of openly LGBTQ+ Commissioners of independent agencies history. Gigi can serve as a model to both communities and her life experience brings with it a perspective on how communications and media policies can work for the benefit of everyone in the US.

The job of the FCC is vitally important to ensure that everyone in the US can participate fully in our society, our economy, our education and health care systems and our civic life. Thus, it is critical that Senate confirm a strong individual who is not afraid to make tough decisions and can bring together the federal, state and local policymakers, rural and urban communities, the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors, digital equity and inclusion advocates and industry to build and execute a blueprint for closing the digital divide. With urge you to act quickly to ensure that the FCC benefits from the knowledge and expertise that Gigi Sohn would bring to this role.

Sincerely,

LGBTQ Victory Institute
David C. Bohnett
GLAAD
Human Rights Campaign
InterAct
LPAC Action Network
National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund
PFLAG
Woodhull Freedom Foundation
November 29, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair, Senate Committee on  
Commerce, Science and Transportation  
Russell Senate Office Building 254  
Washington, DC 20002

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
Ranking Member on  
Commerce, Science and Transportation  
Dirksen Senate Office Building 512  
Washington, DC 20002

Dear Chairwoman Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker:

We write to offer our strong support for the nomination and swift confirmation of Gigi Sohn to serve as Commissioner to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). Although we don’t agree with Gigi on every communications policy matter, she is a thoughtful and pragmatic leader who is willing to work across the aisle and across the ideological spectrum to make progress to ensure that all US households have robust broadband. She has helped improve the quality of life for rural underserved communities with her work on rural broadband deployment and adoption policies.

Ms. Sohn regularly works to forge relationships and alliances with stakeholders across the aisle and with diverse community leaders. When industry has sought the involvement of someone to represent consumer interests, they seek out Gigi first because of her credibility and fairness. For example, she served as Co-Chair of the Broadband Internet Technology Advisory Group (BITAG), which convened network engineers and technical experts from industry and academia to examine and develop a consensus on internet network management practices. The purpose of BITAG was to assist in the creation of acceptable industry standards, as opposed to heavy handed enforcement and regulation.

Over Ms. Sohn’s 30 years of experience in telecommunications, broadband and technology policy has shown she has a strong commitment to the First Amendment. She has regularly worked with organizations representing conservative media interests to ensure all voices and views are heard both as a consumer advocate and as a government official. The FCC will make critical decisions to maintain a competitive and open media environment. Her consistent and long held support of diversity in viewpoints in media will serve all voices well.

We are confident that Ms. Sohn will take her pragmatic and collaborative skills to her new role at the FCC as a commissioner if confirmed by the Senate.

Sincerely,

Hilda Gay Legg - Former USDA Rural Development State Director for Kentucky and the Former Administrator for RUS

Chad Rupe - managing member of Rural America Strategies LLC

Chip Pickering – CEO of INCOMPAS, Former Republican Congressman from Mississippi

Daniel Linville - West Virginia House of Delegates - Chairman of the Committee on Technology and Infrastructure

Judson Hill - Former Republican Georgia State Senator
November 8th, 2021

The Honorable Cynthia Lummis
United States Senate
100 East B St
Casper, Wyoming 82601

Dear Senator Lummis:

I am writing to support the nomination of Gigi Sohn to the Federal Communications Commission. As you know, Visionary Broadband is a small Wyoming-based broadband company that is able to serve consumers here due to the existence of long-standing competitive policies at the FCC.

Throughout Ms. Sohn’s public and private sector career she has been a supporter of small, competitive broadband companies regarding the many policy debates impacting smaller carriers. From the policy battles around Special Access to the Forbearance Petitions involving the Unbundled Network Elements (UNE) regime, Ms. Sohn has been an effective advocate. Our company has been able to offer more efficient and less expensive service to consumers in Wyoming due to our ability to compete in this once monopoly-dominated market.

Ms. Sohn is a respected lawyer and previously served in a key role at the FCC under a former Chairman. She has an excellent understanding of the complex issues facing the FCC today and will be able to hit the ground running at the commission. I hope you will be able to be supportive of her nomination.

Sincerely,

Brian Worthen
CEO, Visionary Broadband
December 9, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chairman, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
The United States Senate
Washington, DC

The Honorable Ben Ray Luján
Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Communications, Media, and Broadband
The United States Senate
Washington, DC

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
The United States Senate
Washington, DC

The Honorable John Thune
Ranking Member, Senate Subcommittee on Communications, Media, and Broadband
The United States Senate
Washington, DC

Dear Chairmen Cantwell and Luján, and Ranking Members Wicker and Thune,

As the CEO of one of the few minority-owned-and-managed media companies in the country, I offer my full support for Gigi Sohn’s confirmation to be FCC Commissioner and urge the Senate Commerce Committee to confirm her nomination without hesitation.

Latino-owned Fuse Media is a multicultural focused, multiplatform entertainment company that serves its millennial and Gen-Z audience through a portfolio of streaming and television brands. With a mandate to keep inclusion and representation at the forefront of all creative and business decisions, I am proud to state that 100% of Fuse original series include Latinos and people of color. But we cannot do this job alone and, as a champion of diversity and inclusion in media and media ownership, Ms. Sohn has proven herself to be a much-needed advocate for communities that continue to be underrepresented in media, despite their prevalence in society.

We know that media plays a critical role in the way we perceive ourselves and others, yet underrepresented communities still struggle to find content that genuinely, accurately, and respectfully reflects their cultures and experiences. While U.S. Census data show Latinos comprising nearly 20% of the US population, the most recent Annenberg Inclusion Initiative study revealed that across media, only about 5% of speaking or named characters during 2019 featured a Hispanic or Latino actor. Many of those roles tend to reinforce negative stereotypes.

It therefore is imperative that smaller, independent media companies committed to equal and positive presentation of underrepresented minorities are given room and resources to thrive in an increasingly consolidated media landscape. Ms. Sohn has proven her commitment to ensuring such equity.
Fuse Media believes that audiences and consumers will benefit from Gigi Sohn’s confirmation as FCC Commissioner. Her commitment to diversity of ownership and viewpoints, along with her support for independent voices, will allow entertainment providers and companies of all sizes to be on a more level playing field, ultimately creating opportunities for more representation and inclusion in media.

Sincerely,

Miguel Roggero
Chief Executive Officer

cc:
Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator Richard Blumenthal
Senator Brian Schatz
Senator Ed Markey
Senator Gary Peters
Senator Tammy Baldwin
Senator Tammy Duckworth
Senator Jon Tester
Senator Kyrsten Sinema
Senator Jacky Rosen
Senator John Hickenlooper
Senator Raphael Warnock

Senator Roy Blunt
Senator Ted Cruz
Senator Deb Fischer
Senator Jerry Moran
Senator Dan Sullivan
Senator Marsha Blackburn
Senator Todd Young
Senator Mike Lee
Senator Ron Johnson
Senator Shelley Moore Capito
Senator Rick Scott
Senator Cynthia Lummis
December 6, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Room S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Re: FCC and NTIA Nominations

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

As technology and telecommunications leaders who are working to connect consumers and businesses to critical communications services across our great nation that are used to support every economic sector, including agriculture, education, health care, and manufacturing, we are writing today to express our strong support for expeditiously confirming President Biden’s nominees to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel, Ms. Gigi Sohn, and Mr. Alan Davidson have demonstrated through their many years of service in the technology and telecommunications sector, that they have the expertise and requisite skills required for their positions. With almost a decade of service as a Commissioner, now-Chairwoman Rosenworcel has effectively managed the FCC during a global pandemic and has implemented key emergency programs to connect students and families to broadband. Ms. Sohn is a well-known public advocate and thought leader with thirty years of experience who has focused her work on ensuring that modern communications services are available to every consumer. As a senior executive in the tech industry, Mr. Davidson has managed complex matters and has been a leader on open and accessible policies, enabling modern communications technology options in the U.S.

Both the FCC and NTIA are important agencies for advancing the nation’s broadband and communications connectivity goals, and they are in need of their full and permanent leadership to fulfill their missions as soon as possible. We urge you to move their nominations forward and confirm them.

Sincerely,

Douglas Denney
VP Legal & Regulatory
Allstream
Vancouver, WA

Chris Levendos
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer—Fiber
Crown Castle
Houston, TX
Jeff Blum  
Senior Vice President, Public Policy and Government Affairs  
**DISH**  
Englewood, CO

Gregory A. Aymar  
Chief Executive Officer  
**FiberComm**  
Sioux City, IA

Kurt Van Wagenen  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
**FirstLight Fiber**  
Albany, NY

Gary Watts  
Chief Executive Officer  
**Fuse.Cloud**  
Jackson, MS

Michael B Galvin  
EVP & General Counsel  
**Granite Telecommunications, LLC**  
Quincy, MA

Fletcher Kittredge  
Chief Executive Officer  
**GWI**  
Biddeford, ME

Edward E. Hilliary, Jr.  
Managing Partner  
**Hilliary Communications, LLC**  
Lawton, OK

Jerrod Reimer  
President and CEO  
**IdeaTek**  
Buhler, KS

Edward J. O’Hara  
Chief Executive Officer  
**InteliQuent**  
Chicago, IL
Andoni Economou  
Chief Operating Officer  
**MetTel**  
New York, NY

Dane Jasper  
Chief Executive Offer  
**Sonic Telecom**  
Santa Rosa, CA

Rebecca H. Sommi  
VP Vendor Management  
**Specrotel Holding Company LLC**  
Neptune, NJ

Chet Kanojia  
Chief Executive Officer  
**Starry, Inc**  
Boston, MA

Joshua Broder  
Chief Executive Officer  
**Tilson**  
Portland, ME

Kenny Gunderman  
Chief Executive Officer  
**Uniti Group, Inc.**  
Little Rock, AR

Brian Worthen  
Chief Executive Officer  
**Visionary Broadband**  
Gillette, WY

Ray LaChance  
Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer  
**ZenFi Networks**  
New York, NY

Ted Gilliam  
General Counsel, Strategic and Regional Sales  
**Zayo**  
Boulder, CO
November 23, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chair
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science
Committee on Commerce, Science
and Transportation
and Transportation
United States Senate
United States Senate
254 Russell Senate Office Bldg
512 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg
Washington, DC 20510
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Nomination of Acting-Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel for Chairman, Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

Nomination of Ms. Gigi B. Sohn for Commissioner, FCC

Nomination of Mr. Alan Davidson for Administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker:

The undersigned communications industry trade organizations write in support of President Biden’s nominees for the FCC and NTIA and urge their swift consideration by your committee and final confirmation by the Senate.

The telecommunications industry is an important part of the US economy accounting for over 2% of Gross Domestic Product. The telecommunications sector is responsible for as many as 10 million jobs and trillions of dollars of investment. Decisions of the FCC and NTIA impact every American consumer.

The recently enacted Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) gives both agencies important roles. Additionally, both agencies are in the process of administering programs authorized through the CARES Act of 2020 and American Rescue Plan of 2021 Act which include several programs to address pandemic related telecommunications issues. A full complement of five FCC Commissioners and a permanent Administrator for NTIA is vital to implement these programs and ensure progress on critical initiatives for our country, including broadband accessibility and affordability, roll out of 5G, and securing telecommunications networks.

The Administration has nominated Ms. Rosenworcel, Ms. Sohn and Mr. Davidson. Each of these nominees is eminently qualified to hold the positions for which they have been nominated and possess the academic background, the qualifications, and expertise to serve as leaders on telecommunications policy.
Given the once in a generation level of the investment the government is making in broadband to advance our nation, we urge the Senate to move quickly to confirm nominees for these key positions.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Matthew Schruers  
President  
CCIA

/s/Gary Bolton  
President & CEO  
Fiber Broadband Association

/s/Chip Pickering  
CEO  
INCOMPAS
The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
254 Russell Senate Building
Washington DC, 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
254 Russell Senate Building
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker,

On behalf of the members and officers of the Communications Workers of America (CWA), I am writing in strong support of the nominations of Jessica Rosenworcel to serve as Chair of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Gigi Sohn for Commissioner. Not only will they continue to lead the FCC into the future by encouraging the equitable deployment of next-generation broadband networks, they will also ensure that the concerns of workers and consumers are the top priority.

As Commissioner and Acting Chair at the FCC, Rosenworcel has fought steadily to ensure access to telecommunications services for all Americans. For example, Rosenworcel’s work has drawn attention to problems with the FCC’s collection of data on broadband access. She has advocated that in order to close the digital divide, we must have access to broadband maps and data that are accurate and reliable. This ensures that when broadband access is expanded, it reaches all communities, not just some. Further, Rosenworcel has been a champion for the protection and expansion of the Lifeline program, which connects low-income households to critical telecommunications services. She understands that these programs are especially important during public health and economic crises like those taking place right now.

Beyond her understanding of the policy issues, Rosenworcel has intimate knowledge of the families and workers behind the policy because she takes the time to understand both. Prior to the pandemic, Rosenworcel was an advocate for closing the Homework Gap by addressing the issue that millions of students take homework home from school but don’t have the internet access to complete it. She has been working on creative solutions to this issue for years, and since the pandemic has widened this gap, this work remains a top priority. Additionally, she has engaged CWA members in dialogue to provide perspective on the telecommunications issues that are hitting the communities we serve the hardest.

Throughout her career, Gigi Sohn has been a staunch advocate for the expansion of affordable internet access. During the T-Mobile/Sprint merger, Sohn was a key ally in the fight to protect the jobs of the working families who ultimately ended up being harmed by the merger. She believes in fighting to ensure that workers are protected first and foremost. Additionally, she supports efforts to hold broadband service providers accountable through state regulatory oversight. Her voice, experience and expertise are just what the FCC needs.

The leadership exhibited by these two women focus on greater opportunity, accessibility, and affordability in our communications services, especially broadband services. Further, their tireless advocacy on behalf of workers and consumers has never been more important. I strongly urge you to swiftly advance the nominations of Jessica
Rosenworcel and Gigi Sohn to serve as the next Chair and Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), as they are exactly the kind of leaders we need in this moment.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dan Mauer
Director of Government Affairs
Communications Workers of America (CWA)
November 30, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation  

Re: Nomination of Gigi Sohn for Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission  

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker:

I write to strongly support the nomination of Gigi Sohn to serve as Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and urge the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation to move her nomination forward expeditiously.

Ms. Sohn is extraordinarily qualified for this position. Her record reflects a long and distinguished career in technology, media and telecommunications policy as a consumer advocate, public servant and academic. In addition, she is widely recognized for her commitment to principle over partisanship and is deeply respected by industry, civil society groups, Republicans and Democrats.

More, Ms. Sohn has always been a strong defender of free speech and an advocate of robust, substantive debate. Our First Amendment is nonpartisan and has been respected by Republican and Democratic FCC commissioners alike. Ms. Sohn has an extensive record of writing and speaking in defense of free speech and as FCC Commissioner would uphold free expression by those with different views.

The FCC’s work has never been more important for preserving a strong economy and strengthening America’s global leadership. Until Ms. Sohn is confirmed, the absence of a full Commission will continue to hold the agency back from addressing the nation’s most pressing communications policy issues. Ms. Sohn is a pragmatic, data-driven problem solver who understands what it takes to drive the future of work, education and ongoing innovation. Based on more than two decades of knowing Ms. Sohn, I am confident she will ask the critical questions and truly listen to the answers, regardless of whether they are consistent with her personal priorities.

Ms. Sohn has the qualifications of an FCC nominee that every Senator should be pleased and proud to confirm. I encourage you to do so.
Sincerely,

[Signature]

Gary Shapiro  
President and CEO  
Consumer Technology Association

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Open Letter to the U.S. Senate: Confirm Gigi Sohn to the FCC

As a media entrepreneur and the only Black owner/operator of “Big 4” network affiliated broadcast TV stations in the U.S., as well as the owner of traditional and digital media platforms, including The Weather Channel, TheGrio.com, Local Now, JusticeCentral.TV, Comedy.TV, Cars.TV, HBCUGo.TV, Pets.TV, Sports.TV, Recipe.TV and many others, I take very seriously the role of the Federal Communications Commission in promoting diversity, supporting localism, and protecting freedom of speech. That is why I am supporting Gigi Sohn to be confirmed as an FCC Commissioner.

It should not be the case in 2021 that Black Americans, who comprise approximately 12% of the U.S. population, own a majority interest in less than 2% of full-power broadcast TV stations. I should not be the only Black American who owns and operates major network affiliated stations. The FCC is charged with promoting diversity of ownership and viewpoints yet has fallen short of achieving a truly diverse media landscape. Gigi Sohn understands and is a champion against this inequity.

Over many years, she has worked nonstop to promote greater competition and more minority ownership in broadcasting. As a commissioner, she would have the tools to improve ownership diversity among FCC licensees. As the first openly LGBTQ person in history nominated to the FCC, Gigi truly understands on a personal level why diversity and inclusion for all Americans matters. Please note that Mignon Clyburn, the first Black woman ever to serve as acting Chair of the FCC, understands the job extremely well and supports Gigi's confirmation, and so do I.

As an owner of local broadcast TV stations, I understand the critical importance to the health and safety of our citizens, as well as to our democracy, of robust local broadcast news organizations. According to the Pew Charitable Trusts, most Americans prefer to get their local news from local broadcasters. The FCC is supposed to promote localism but often fails to protect local broadcast affiliates against abuses from much larger companies and industries. Gigi Sohn understands this innately. For years, she has advocated for restoring a more reasonable balance of power between local broadcasters and major conglomerates in the communications ecosystem. She will use her seat on the FCC to bring the “local” back to localism.

Finally, as someone who speaks out against injustice, racism, unfairness, and corruption wherever and whenever I see it, I value our American freedom of
speech, and Gigi Sohn will help protect our rights as American citizens. Whether fighting for an open Internet or for the free speech rights of conservatives with whom she disagrees, Gigi advocates for all people to speak and be heard. That is why multiple conservatives who disagree with her on a lot of issues publicly support Gigi’s confirmation to the FCC. They have seen her fight tirelessly for diversity and freedom of speech. The Senate should act quickly to confirm Gigi Sohn to the FCC. She will do a great job for our country!!!

Continued Success,

Byron Allen ■
November 12, 2021

Senator Lisa Murkowski  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Pat Toomey  
455 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Mitt Romney  
354 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Rob Portman  
448 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Susan Collins  
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator John Boozman  
141 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Tommy Tuberville  
142 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator John Kennedy  
416 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Murkowski, Toomey, Romney, Portman, Collins, Boozman, Tuberville, and Kennedy:

As a proud Republican, and Co-Chair of the Public Officials Committee of the Fiber Broadband Association in Washington, DC (representing 150 cities, towns, counties, and state agencies), I find myself in unfamiliar territory urging you to confirm Gigi Sohn, a member of the Democratic Party, as an FCC Commissioner.
I’m expressing strong support for Gigi Sohn because there’s a lot at stake for our nation’s economy. Nearly half of Americans can’t easily participate in the digital economy because they live in areas unserved or underserved by broadband providers. Ms. Sohn’s mastery of policy and her pragmatic approach will help expand broadband investment while helping to curb lip service from providers.

In the last few years, I’ve gotten to know Gigi Sohn as a charismatic and pragmatic leader in the telecommunications industry. I’ve found her to be thoughtful, thorough, prepared, and balanced. She not only understands how policy can impact our states and cities, but also how it can influence business and industry. **Ms. Sohn wants to see policy that spurs innovation and investment, as well as economic development and jobs.**

It should be noted that Big Telco is spending $8 million a week in Washington to preserve the status quo, and has labeled Ms. Sohn as an “activist.” They’re concerned that should she be appointed to the FCC, providers will need to be more accountable to consumers, businesses, and taxpayers (who’ve subsidized their efforts with little in return). Frankly, that’s exactly what the country needs to remain economically competitive in the digital age.

To achieve our national goals of expanding quality, affordable broadband service to all Americans, it will require an FCC Commissioner who can work collaboratively across party lines—and with industry, business, consumers, and local government. Gigi Sohn is that person.

I respectfully urge you and your Senate colleagues to confirm Gigi Sohn.

Please let me know if you’d like to discuss further.

Sincerely,

Bob Knight,
Commissioner &
Co-Chair, Public Officials Committee
Fiber Broadband Association, Washington, DC

Cc. Geoffrey Morris, Chairman, Ridgefield ECDC
Kimberly McKinley, Deputy Director, Utah Infrastructure Agency, Committee Co-Chair
Dear Senators Cantwell and Wicker,

We, the undersigned public interest organizations, submit this letter as members of Broadband Connects America (“BCA”), a coalition of diverse national, state-based, and local nonprofit organizations, as well as state agencies, that advocate for policies to promote broadband access in underserved rural areas. We write to urge the swift and concurrent confirmation of Jessica Rosenworcel for Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chair, Gigi Sohn for FCC Commissioner, and Alan Davidson for Administrator of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). These agencies need immediate leadership to bring affordable, reliable, high-speed internet to rural and Tribal communities. A failure to confirm them all before the end of this year will jeopardize the ability of rural communities to engage in modern society as others with the internet can.

Over the last two years, as the COVID-19 pandemic took root in the United States, it became clear that broadband is an essential service and that the government must take action to connect people across the nation. In order to ensure the steps Congress has taken to help close the digital divide can succeed, these agencies need Senate-confirmed leaders. Each of these nominees bring the decades of experience and commitment required to connect rural and Tribal communities.

During Jessica Rosenworcel’s tenure at the FCC, she has rapidly implemented a Congressional program to bring broadband to millions of people who could not previously afford it; championed the need for reliable data on broadband availability that will ensure communities are not wrongfully denied broadband deployment funding, and connected tribes by providing them with unlicensed spectrum to buildout broadband and by making Tribal libraries eligible for E-Rate funds. This experience alone makes her an exceptional choice for FCC Chair. Additionally, she is a widely respected leader in tech...
policy, a dedicated consumer advocate, and a swift decision maker who will most certainly bridge the digital divide.

Likewise, Gigi Sohn is an experienced consumer advocate who has done more to close the digital divide than almost anyone else in the field. During Gigi’s career, including working as a top advisor to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler and as the co-Founder and CEO of Public Knowledge, she has tirelessly championed universal connectivity to a free and open internet. Gigi is known for bringing together strange bedfellows to get the job done -- including public interest groups, industry, urban & rural, and stakeholders from across the aisle. Her pragmatism will ensure that rural communities are no longer left on the wrong side of the digital divide because of partisan fights.

Finally, Alan Davidson has over 20 years of experience in government, industry, and public interest advocacy, making him an ideal candidate to lead the NTIA. If passed, the bipartisan infrastructure package and budget reconciliation bill will give the NTIA responsibility for multiple programs that will connect rural and Tribal communities, including a $42.5 billion broadband deployment program, a grant program to promote digital equity, and a program to give low-income consumers the devices they so urgently need to connect. Alan Davidson’s leadership experience, both within industry and the public interest sector, positions him to successfully stand up these important programs to get rural and Tribal communities connected.

The FCC and the NTIA have a lot of work ahead of them, and these three experienced and committed nominees’ appointments cannot be delayed any further if we want people across the country to ring in the new year with newly adopted broadband. Thus, Congress must confirm all three nominees before the end of the year. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Access Humboldt
Benton Institute for Broadband and Society
California Center for Rural Policy
Center for Rural Strategies
ConnectMaine
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Maine Broadband Coalition
National Digital Equity Center
Public Knowledge
Rural Wireless Association, Inc.
The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Mississippi
Together for Hope: A Rural Development Coalition
X-Lab
Nov 2, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ben Ray Lujan  
498 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Thune  
515 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Cantwell, Wicker, Lujan, and Thune,

On behalf of ADT Security Services, the leading provider of electronic security and alarm monitoring services in the United States, with more than 20,000 employees across the country, I am writing to express our strong support for Gigi Sohn’s nomination to join the Federal Communications Commission as a Commissioner.

At ADT, we believe everyone deserves to feel safe. Our customers depend on our security and monitoring services, whether they are dealing with life safety threats resulting from an intrusion, a health crisis, a flood, carbon monoxide (CO) threat, or a fire. Those services depend on customer access to robust, reliable connections to our alarm monitoring centers and, in turn, public safety officials and first responders. While technology has changed over the course of ADT’s nearly 150-year history, our customers’ expectations have not. Our customers expect us to help keep them safe, and we don’t take that trust for granted.

Gigi Sohn has taken the time to learn the ins and outs of the electronic security industry and has been a regular speaker at industry events year after year. She is trusted and respected within our industry. Ms. Sohn has introduced members of our industry to her own broad network, and has given an industry like ours, comprised mainly of small, regional businesses, a voice in national policy debates. Having worked with Ms. Sohn for years, I have found her to be highly knowledgeable, egalitarian, and above all, reasonable.
Over the past year and a half, the American public has become critically aware of the divide between the digital haves and have-nots. When jobs, schools, and even alarm monitoring moved to a home environment, the quality of one’s internet connection quickly became paramount. As the FCC looks for new and innovative ways to expand access to quality, affordable communications networks for all Americans, I have no doubt that Ms. Sohn’s passion for universal connectivity and her collaborative spirit will be an asset to the Commission.

On behalf of ADT, I respectfully ask that you vote to confirm Gigi Sohn.

Sincerely,

Holly Borgmann

cc: Senator Marco Rubio
    Senator Rick Scott
November 22, 2021

The Honorable Jerry Moran
United States Senate
100 North Broadway
Suite 210
Wichita, Kansas 67202

Dear Senator Moran:

I am writing in support of the nomination of Gigi Sohn to the Federal Communications Commission.

As you know, IdeaTek is a Kansas-based small broadband provider that has strived to compete against the larger incumbent carriers for many years. We have been able to offer more efficient and affordable service to consumers and small businesses in Kansas due to our ability to compete in the monopoly-dominated broadband market.

While Ms. Sohn may have some more progressive views on matters that you and I may disagree with, she has been a strong advocate for small competitive broadband companies throughout her thirty-year career. We strive for customers to have freedom and choice when it comes to broadband services, and competitiveness is a crucial part of that mission. This issue outweighs other potential policy changes she may advocate for, as Ms. Sohn’s commitment to competitiveness is essential for the future of broadband.

Ms. Sohn is a respected lawyer and previously served in a key role at the FCC under a former Chair. She has an excellent understanding of the complex issues facing the FCC today and in the near future. It is my hope that you can join me in recognizing the dedication she displays to competitiveness in broadband, and the value she could bring to the agency and the industry it oversees.

Sincerely,

Daniel Friesen
Managing Partner & Chief Innovation Officer