

Intro. to 2 million kids WITHOUT Internet @ Home

We begin with a podcast from San Francisco's Mission District

where Larry's bike ride/tour begins:



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CPUC Asleep at the Controls on Digital Divide Issues

CPUC = California Public Utilities Commission

May 18, 2017

By: L.A. Ortega

There are at least two million (2,000,000) children without Internet at home in California. In many (too many) regions in Southern California, 20 out of 25 students in a classroom are without Internet at home. What happens when a large swath of our economic future are without life's most basic tool, Internet at home?

First the Positives (from the eyes of the Internet Service Providers):

1. Profits soar,
2. Service to the consumer wanes, cost savings,
3. Innovation stalls, no research and development because no competition,
4. Board of Directors and Executive Staff make a killing on salaries and bonuses,

5. Customers are locked in for life with limited or no competition.

Now the Negatives (from the eyes of the Consumer):

1. Prices soar, bait and switch is standard practice,
2. Quality of service poor,
3. Kids and parents cannot get access to on-line tools they need to improve academically,
4. Disenchantment, economic stress.

On May 12, 2016 CPUC President Picker asked his fellow colleagues on the California Public Utilities Commission to stand-down on their request to incorporate accountability clauses in the merger approval relative to the promises made by Charter Communications. One year later, April 2017, members of the One Million NIU family wrote President Picker asking for a status on the Charter Communications' promises. No response has been received as of May 18th, and as far as we know, Charter has not fulfilled any of their commitments that were "key to the merger approval" (Los Angeles Times).

Perversion/Distraction of CPUC's CASF and Rural Connectivity Goals:

Getting Internet connectivity to our rural regions in California is definitely important, no doubt! However, *the crux of the digital divide issues are in urban areas*, where connectivity is alive and well. In the heart of Central Los Angeles, a majority of the children attending LAUSD do not have Internet at home; in Pomona (30 miles east of Los Angeles) a very urban area, many children do not have Internet at home; in the San Gabriel Valley and in Ontario, Ca., also very urban areas, there are classrooms of 25 children with 20 of them not having Internet at home.

What is CASF? It is the California Advanced Services Fund (CASF) designed (funded by you, the rate payer) to help close the digital divide, minimize the Internet *have-nots*. In part, CASF gives money to groups who train people how to use the Internet. For example NIU was funded by CASF: under the grant we showed parents how to access on-line resources to guide their children to college, keep them safe on the Internet, Google Translate, and more. NIU's 20-hour curriculum provided a series of training modules that provided relevancy as well as training on how to use the Internet. We touched over 28 million people with our message of broadband adoption (closing the digital divide).

The Perversion: The CPUC Commissioners, asleep at the controls, have allowed CPUC staff to paint a picture that implies if all rural areas are connected the digital divide is closed. This mentality reminds me of my conversation in the year 2000 with then FCC Chairman Michael Powell, when he said "every school will have a computer and therefore the digital divide will be closed." The hardware and wiring of the Internet is only half the equation. The utilization, the reasons why, the relevance is the other and most important half of the equation. Without giving families the reasons why and training to use the Internet, having the connection is almost irrelevant. The two go hand in hand.

CPUC Manager, Robert Wullenjohn's recent communication on CASF has got it dead-wrong. A false narrative of accomplishment is being pushed-out and will still leave 2 million children without Internet at home even after connecting 98% of rural regions.

It cost cable Internet Service Providers \$1.32 per month to deliver an internet signal to a home. (Time Warner Cable 2013 report to FCC).

For the current Internet Service Providers (ISP's), cost is not at issue. According to their own records, it only cost ISP's a \$1.32 per month to send an Internet signal to a home. By and

between the commitments made by Charter Communications (Spectrum) and Comcast, along with the investment CASF can make into NIU-like training programs, a significant impact toward broadband adoption (closing the digital divide) can be made...our economic future in California depends on getting this right, today. I am sure Robert Wullenjohn, CPUC staff, and his team at the CPUC meant well, but their lack of expertise in this area is obvious.

What to do?: CPUC Commissioners must demand execution and enforcement of promises made from both Comcast and Charter Communications (Spectrum); redirect CPUC staff to visit working NIU-like training models to learn how training is key to broadband adoption and what CPUC staff can do to appropriately implement measuring tools to enhance, *not stifle* broadband training programs in low income neighborhoods.

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Founder One Million NIU (New Internet Users)

In Case you missed it:



March 2017, Triple NIU Graduation: Santa Ana, Inglewood and Orange School Districts



May 2017: Garvey School District NIU Module I, 4 languages



April 2017: The Economic Impact of an Ignored Digital Divide

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