

TOUTING RELEVANCE SEEN AS KEY TO PROMOTING BROADBAND ADOPTION

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Promoting the relevance of broadband service to those who have not yet chosen to subscribe was one of the key steps cited at a Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation subcommittee hearing on broadband adoption today.

Sen. Mark Pryor (D., Ark.), chairman of the subcommittee on communications, technology, and the Internet, said there seem to be three primary reasons why people don't subscribe to broadband services. "A lot of Americans just don't understand the relevancy," he said. "A lot of Americans feel like they are not capable, they just don't have the skills to do it. ... And some Americans don't feel like they can't afford it."

During the hearing, Sen. Marco Rubio (R., Fla.) asked panelists how lawmakers could make the issue of broadband adoption more relevant to constituents who have not been persuaded to subscribe.

David Cohen, executive vice president and Comcast Corp., noted that 80% of Fortune 500 companies today only accept job applications online. In addition, Mr. Cohen pointed to the links between broadband access and educational achievement.

"A 21st century education today is vastly enriched by digital technology," he said. A quality education is "tied to being able to work on the Internet after school and at home."

Sen. Rubio also asked what a realistic goal for broadband adoption would be after five or ten more years.

Sunne Wright McPeak, president and chief executive officer of the California Emerging Technology Fund, said that the target in California is 80% adoption by 2017, with "no one region and no one demographic group at less than 70%."

Former Sen. John Sununu (R., N.H.), honorary co-chair of Broadband for America, said the delays by some in adopting broadband services require a "multifaceted solution, and one that need not - and should not - be carrier- or government-centric." He stressed the benefits of a "light regulatory touch."

Sen. Pryor asked about Mr. Sununu's suggestion that the Internet tax moratorium should be extended.

"It's a basic economic fact: you tax something, you get less of it," Mr. Sununu said. "We want to make sure that this infrastructure is as economically sound and robust as possible, and it certainly helps to prevent not just the federal government, but states, cities, towns, - all of them - from being able to tax it." - Brian Hammond,