



Congressman Pedro R. Pierluisi
Remarks as Prepared for Delivery
“Connecting Puerto Rico”
A Puerto Rico Broadband Taskforce Briefing
June 5, 2012

Good afternoon. I am pleased to welcome you all to this briefing, entitled “Connecting Puerto Rico.” The purpose of today’s event is to educate Members of Congress, their staff and other stakeholders in Washington on the Puerto Rico Broadband Strategic Plan. This Plan was released last month by the Puerto Rico Broadband Taskforce, which was established by Governor Luis Fortuño in 2011.

Simply stated, it is imperative that we have the correct policies in place, on both the federal and local level, to enable households and businesses in Puerto Rico to access and adopt high-speed Internet and other modern telecommunications services at affordable rates. Currently, as the Taskforce Report reveals in stark terms, broadband access and adoption on the Island is substantially lower than access and adoption in the U.S. mainland. In order to close this gap, we first need to understand the nature and scope of the problem and then we need to formulate a comprehensive strategy to address it.

That is precisely what the Taskforce, working closely with the non-profit organization Connect Puerto Rico, has done. Now, it is the responsibility of policymakers, in both San Juan and Washington D.C., to closely examine the contents of the Report and to implement the Taskforce’s recommendations in an appropriate and timely fashion. Since 2009, I have been urging the Federal Communications Commission to ensure that it recognizes the digital divide between Puerto Rico and the rest of the United States and that it crafts policies designed to mitigate, and ultimately eliminate, this divide. The Taskforce’s strategic plan will greatly assist me and my colleagues in these ongoing advocacy efforts.

I want to thank Juan Eugenio Rodríguez, Puerto Rico's Chief Information Officer, who chairs the Taskforce. I also want to thank Governor Fortuño's staff here in Washington, especially Tiffany Watkins and Colleen Newman, who helped organize this briefing. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Raquel Noriega, the Public Policy Director at *Connected Nation* and her capable team, for all of their assistance in this endeavor. Raquel will moderate today's panel of experts, who will share their insight and perspective on this important topic.

In closing, I want to make a self-evident statement, but one that always bears repeating. In this age, so much of our professional and personal lives depends upon technology, especially the Internet. Those jurisdictions that lack access to these modern communication and information tools will fall further and further behind their more well-connected counterparts. Their economies will struggle and the quality of life of their citizens will suffer. That is why Puerto Rico's leaders are advocating for a national telecommunications policy that does not leave our Island behind. I firmly believe that, thanks to the Strategic Plan developed by the Taskforce, coupled with the right federal policy implemented by Congress and the FCC, we can achieve our goal of ensuring that Puerto Rico's 3.7 million American citizens can access and adopt broadband to the same degree as their fellow citizens in the 50 states.

I now want to turn the floor over to the man of the hour, Puerto Rico CIO Juan Eugenio Rodríguez.