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Contact: Rhonda Spears Bell, 917-678-5870
rspearsbell@nul.org

National Civil Rights Organizations Announce Broadband Opportunity Recommendations to Address Disparities in Access and Adoption

WASHINGTON, DC – National civil rights organizations including the **National Urban League**, **National Council of La Raza**, **Asian American Justice Center**, **League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)**, **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**, and the leading minority research and public policy think tank **Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies** today unveiled a formal Report and series of recommendations from the first Broadband Opportunity Summit (the “Summit”).

At the Summit, held in February, more than 30 leaders from the civil rights, public and private sectors developed a formal set of recommendations to advance innovative solutions to the economic, educational and healthcare disparities that exist among communities of color. The report specifically addresses policy barriers that have slowed the growth of “killer applications” such as e-learning, telehealth and telecommuting that can maximize the social and economic value of broadband if adopted by all Americans.

One of the major recommendations from the Summit is the formation of the Broadband Opportunity Coalition. The Summit sponsors and other organizations plan to formally launch the Coalition within the next month. For the first time, the nation’s leading civil rights and public policy organizations will come together, with one voice, to advance broadband opportunity. The Coalition will submit a joint application for federal stimulus grant funds made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (“ARRA”) to support broadband deployment, mapping, adoption and support for public computer centers.

“To date, our technological resources have been drastically underutilized, particularly by minority communities,” shares Marc Morial, President and CEO of the National Urban League. “The Report and the forthcoming Broadband Opportunity Coalition will shed new light on the transformative power of broadband and digital innovation, and on the compelling need to increase the adoption and use of these technological platforms to create greater wealth and new job opportunities for minority communities and for the nation at large. We are very excited that the nation’s leading civil rights organizations are developing collective recommendations to address our nation’s technology challenges.”

Janet Murguia, President and CEO of National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States, suggested that “low-income people need to be first in line when it comes to this administration’s resources around broadband adoption.”

One Economy Corporation, the nation’s leader in digital access issues for the underserved in rural and urban communities, will lead Coalition’s stimulus application to ensure that people of color receive full access to broadband services and its benefits. For nearly a decade, One Economy has worked to not only ensure

availability and affordability of broadband, but to develop content that is relevant and meaningful to low-income people. One Economy has helped to bring broadband into more than 350,000 homes of low-income people, employed nearly 3,000 youth to train their community members to use technology effectively, and created public-purpose media visited by over 17 million people that brings robust healthcare, employment and educational resources to low-income users.

Rey Ramsey, Chief Executive Officer of One Economy Corporation, provided more insight into what the Coalition's application might incorporate. "Our goal is to bring proven program models to local communities by, for example, training individuals at local Urban League chapters or LULAC tech centers so that our unique online content like the Public Internet Channel and youth technology service initiatives like Digital Connectors, which employs high school students to be digital ambassadors in their communities, will spread to more neighborhoods than we currently reach. In the end, the Coalition will move the meter so that more people of color are on line and not in line."

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a public policy and research institution with a primary focus on issues of concern to African Americans and people of color, will be evaluating the efforts of the Coalition to ensure that underserved and unserved communities are positively impacted. To capture the diversity of Coalition members and their constituents, the Joint Center will also work in collaboration with other think tanks and experts to measure results. "We strongly believe that those who choose not to join the online world will not make it in the 'real world,'" said Joint Center President & CEO Ralph Everett. "All students need digital access to reach their potential and digital participation in minority communities is essential."

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About the Broadband Opportunity Summit

The Broadband Opportunity Summit held on February 25, 2009 at the Newseum in Washington, DC. was hosted by: **Marc Morial**, President & CEO, National Urban League (NUL); **Janet Murguia**, President & CEO, National Council of La Raza (NCLR); **Ralph B. Everett**, President & CEO, Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies; **David Honig**, President & Executive Director, Minority Media and Telecommunications Council (MMTC); and **Karen Narasaki**, President & CEO, Asian American Justice Center (AAJC).

The Summit was facilitated by **Charles Firestone**, Executive Director, Communications and Society Program, The Aspen Institute. A list of the Roundtable participants can be found in Appendix II of the Summit Report.