

Thank you for inviting me here today to talk about telecommunications.

There has been much talk about the new economy and the opportunity for all of us to take advantage of new technologies.

However, people and politicians can talk all they want, but the important thing is that these new technologies must be available to everyone.

That's why as a part of my Big Plan for Minnesota I have a telecommunications reform proposal for all of Minnesota whether you live in the city, a small town, or on tribal land.

Incredibly, our state laws governing telecommunications have been on the books for over 80 years and are long over due for change.

My plan is designed to create local competition and provide for everyone in Minnesota to have access to State-of-the-art technology.

I want to make sure that you are not left on the wrong side of the "digital divide."

I consider myself an entrepreneur and I hope that the entire state will get the entrepreneurial spirit. But for many the opportunity to be successful will depend on a level playing field for access to new technologies.

Everyone in Minnesota and in this country should have equal access to high speed Internet service.

Everyone in Minnesota and in this country should not only have access to basic telephone service, but access at a fair and affordable price.

These things can only happen if the states provide for competition among telecommunication service providers -- and that is exactly what my plan does.

I am sure I don't have to tell you how things are changing in rural Minnesota. What was once a rural economy based primarily on agriculture, is fast becoming an economy based on recreation, entertainment, tourism, small manufacturing and high tech service companies.

It is a different world --A world that depends so much on telecommunications and technology.

In this new world we can expect that within five years more than one-half of all credit card purchases will be made via the Internet.

Business to business e-commerce in the United States, estimated at \$43 billion last year, will exceed \$1.3 trillion in the next two years.



In addition, in 1998, the Internet was used to transmit 3.4 trillion e-mail messages-- well over 100,000 every second of every hour of every day.

I want to congratulate the FCC for organizing this very important meeting because based on what is going on in our world today it is absolutely imperative that--

No one,

No matter where they live,

--Be left without access to these new technologies.

I hope that when you leave here you will work with your state governments to make sure that telecommunications reform is at the top of their legislative agenda.

Thank you.