



NEWS

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D. C. 20554

News media Information 202 / 418-0500
Fax-On-Demand 202 / 418-2830
TTY 202/418-2555
Internet: <http://www.fcc.gov>
<ftp.fcc.gov>

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News Media Contacts:
Rosemary Kimball at (202) 418-0511
Dan Rumelt at (202) 418-7512

FCC TO HOLD CONSUMER FORUMS, TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEMONSTRATIONS, WORKSHOPS AND ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS IN SOUTH DAKOTA AND NORTH DAKOTA, MAY 24-27

Washington, DC – The Commissioners and staff of the Federal Communications Commission will be holding a series of communications technology events and public forums in North Dakota and South Dakota during the week of May 24, 2004, including consumer forums, community meetings, workshops and hearings on a variety of telecommunications issues.

The events will include a strong focus on telecommunications issues of particular importance to people in rural communities and on Tribal lands, including: uses of satellite technology to provide educational and farm benefits; development of rural wireless broadband internet access; a hearing on how radio and television broadcasters serve the needs and interests of local communities; and the delivery of new telecommunications services to Indian Country.

One of the centerpiece events of the week will be a two-day Regional Workshop and Roundtable Discussion of telecommunications developments on May 26 and 27, part of the FCC's ongoing Indian Telecommunications Initiatives (ITI) program. FCC Chairman Michael Powell will deliver the keynote address to the forum.

South Dakota Governor Mike Rounds and South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Chairman Bob Sahr will join FCC officials on May 25 in Rapid City to showcase the growth of local WISP (wireless internet service provider) capabilities.

On the evening of May 26, Rapid City will be the site of an FCC hearing to explore issues of localism in broadcasting, the third in a series of regional FCC hearings on the topic.

The FCC's Indian Telecommunications Initiatives is a comprehensive program that seeks to promote understanding, cooperation and trust among American Indian tribes, Alaska Native villages, and tribal organizations; the FCC and other governmental agencies; and the telecommunications industry. It is designed to build partnerships to target specific concerns, identify potential solutions, and bring affordable, quality telecommunications services to Indian Country.

Specifically, ITI seeks to increase the telephone penetration rate among tribal communities; facilitate the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure in Indian Country necessary to provide telecommunications services; and inform tribes and tribal consumers about

financial support available through federal government programs, including Universal Service Fund programs.

Summaries of the events scheduled for the week follow:

Monday, May 24:

Tribal Consumer Forum, Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Fort Yates, ND.

In coordination with Tribal leadership and telecommunication program staff, FCC staff will hold a forum with Standing Rock community members to present an overview of consumer issues, including the Lifeline and Link-Up telephone discount programs, questions about telephone bills and wireless services, and emerging technologies, including broadband, Internet telephony and digital TV. The general public is invited to attend. The program will be conducted by staff from the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau. (11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)

Radio Show at KLND-FM on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, Little Eagle, SD.

FCC staff will participate in a radio call-in show at KLND-FM, serving the Standing Rock Sioux and Cheyenne River Sioux Reservations, for listeners to hear about current telecommunications issues and be able call in with questions about telephone billing, wireless phones and service, and other topics. (2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.)

Tuesday, May 25:

Upper Midwest Aerospace Consortium satellite demonstration, Rapid City, SD.

FCC officials will visit with the Upper Midwest Aerospace Consortium (UMAC), a consortium of regional educational institutions, to discuss and see demonstrations of how UMAC uses several types of satellite technology to gather and analyze data that they then provide to farmers, ranchers, foresters, educators and classrooms at no cost. The event is being held at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. (1:45-2:45 p.m.)

Rural Wireless Internet Service Provider (WISP) Demonstration, Rapid City, SD

South Dakota Governor Rounds and South Dakota Public Utilities Commission Chairman Sahr will join FCC Commissioners as several WISP representatives will demonstrate how small, entrepreneurial WISPs are serving rural communities and using wireless broadband services to bring opportunities for greater economic development, and discuss how the challenges in serving rural communities can be overcome. The event is being held at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. (3:30 - 5:30 p.m.)

Wednesday, May 26

Indian Telecommunications Initiatives (ITI) Rapid City Regional Workshop & Roundtable, Rapid City, SD.

This day and a half long public forum will focus on nuts and bolts information regarding telecommunications development in Indian Country with the goal of providing clear practical information that Tribal leaders and decision makers can use to prioritize their telecommunications deployment goals and economic development agendas. Regional issues will be examined, along with broadband deployment throughout rural America; Universal Service support for Tribal telecom choices; the role of emerging technologies; telemedicine and distance learning applications; and federal funding mechanisms. The FCC is hosting this event in cooperation with the National Tribal Telecommunications Association (NTTA), the association

of tribally-owned and operated telecommunications companies. FCC Chairman Powell will deliver the Keynote Address. The event is being held at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center. (8:30 AM – 5:00 p.m.)

FCC Broadcast Localism Hearing, Rapid City, SD.

The third in a series of national hearings by the FCC Localism Task Force will be held in Rapid City, SD. The purpose of the hearing is to gather information from consumers, industry, civic organizations and others on broadcasters' service to their local communities. FCC Chairman Powell and Commissioners Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein will hear testimony from members of the public. The event will be held at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology. (5:30 – 9:00 p.m.)

Thursday, May 27

ITI Rapid City Roundtable Discussion, Rapid City, SD

In the second day of the ITI Rapid City event, building upon the previous day's Workshop presentations, FCC staff will host an interactive government-to-government consultative discussion about Commission rules, programs and policies affecting telecommunications services in Indian Country, how to work with Tribes to fulfill the objectives of the FCC's ITI to promote understanding, cooperation, and a strong trust relationship, and innovative methods of consultation with tribes on telecom issues impacting tribal communities. As with the Workshop, this Roundtable is being held at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center. (9 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.)

Rapid City Consumer Forum, Rapid City, SD

FCC and South Dakota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) consumer affairs staff will meet with consumers to discuss telecom issues including telephone billing, local and long distance service, wireless phones and service, broadband, the transition to digital TV, and consumer information and complaint handling provided by each agency. This event will be kicked off with opening remarks by Rapid City Mayor Jim Shaw. Staff from both agencies will be on hand to meet with consumers individually and in small groups -- so consumers should bring recent phone bills and questions. This event will be held at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center. (6:30 – 8:00 p.m.)

Registration for ITI Rapid City and More Information

To register for the FCC's ITI Rapid City Regional Workshop and Roundtable, or to obtain additional information, please call 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) press number 5, call 202-418-2513, fax 202-418-1414, or e-mail itirapidcity@fcc.gov.

For more information on the FCC's ITI Rapid City Regional Workshop and Roundtable please contact Geoffrey Blackwell, FCC Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, at 202-418-8192, geoffrey.blackwell@fcc.gov; or Dan Rumelt, FCC Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, at 202-418-7512, dan.rumelt@fcc.gov. Updates and further information will also be made available on the FCC's Tribal Initiatives website at: <http://www.fcc.gov/indians>.

Information on Broadcast Localism Hearing

For additional information concerning the May 26 broadcast localism hearing, visit the FCC Localism Task Force website at <http://www.fcc.gov/localism> or contact the Task Force directly at (202) 418-7777 or by email at localism@fcc.gov.

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