

For Immediate Release
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Next Century Cities, Public Knowledge, and the American Action Forum Host Tech Policy Event, Encourage Bipartisan Action

*Elected Officials, Policy Experts, Broadband Champions Discuss Potential Steps
Forward on Tech Policy Issues*

Washington, D.C. – Yesterday, **January 15, 2019**, Next Century Cities, Public Knowledge, and the American Action Forum hosted **Opportunities for Bipartisan Tech Policy**. Elected officials, policy leaders, industry experts, and around 200 attendees gathered to discuss tech policy priorities and determine action steps for the new Congress.

The day began with an opening keynote conversation with **Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel, Federal Communications Commission**, at **9:10am**. Moderator **Deb Socia, Executive Director, Next Century Cities**, questioned Commissioner Rosenworcel about her thoughts on closing the digital divide, expanding rural broadband deployment, and addressing digital privacy. **Commissioner Rosenworcel** called the fact that 12 million American students face a homework gap, “the cruellest part of the digital divide,” and suggested that unlicensed spectrum might be one of many innovative solutions for improving connectivity for students across the country.

Socia referenced the fact that Internet access is an issue for 58% of rural Americans, and **Commissioner Rosenworcel** responded by saying that the FCC can and should be collecting more accurate data in order to address the problem. **Commissioner Rosenworcel explained**, “There are too many places in this country where they aren’t talking about 5G, they’ve got no G.”

A keynote conversation between **Blair Levin, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution** and **former FCC Commissioner Robert McDowell, Partner, Cooley LLP**, followed at **9:35am**. Their discussion was moderated by **Will Rinehart, Director of Technology and Innovation Policy, the American Action Forum**, and touched on the potential of 5G and the economics of different broadband deployment models.

Levin said, “We need to have a race to the top,” as a country to innovate around 5G. He also explained that local government should be empowered to make decisions around the issue, because, “The digital divide is going to get greater... Some areas are going to get fiber and 5G, and cities next door will struggle to get good broadband access.”

Both speakers criticized aspects of federal broadband deployment programs. **McDowell** stated that, in the end, the more than \$300 billion in private investment capital is what will determine the future of 5G in America, not a \$600 million federal program.

Panel discussions on rural broadband, digital privacy and security, and spectrum took place in addition to the keynotes. Speakers acknowledged that a growing majority of voters across the political spectrum are ready for better government policies to address these modern issues, and conversations focused on potential bipartisan solutions.

In closing, **Deb Socia addressed the audience, saying**, “We can find ways forward on these issues. Let’s make it happen.”

This event was made possible through sponsorships from [Magellan Advisors](#), [WifiForward](#), and the [Internet Society](#).

Learn more about **Opportunities for Bipartisan Tech Policy** here: <https://nextcenturycities.org/event/opportunities-for-bipartisan-tech-policy/>

Watch the event here: <https://youtu.be/rbHSCHYWjC4>

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Next Century Cities is a non-profit membership organization of over 190 communities, founded to support communities and their elected leaders, including mayors and other officials, as they seek to ensure that all have access to fast, affordable, and reliable internet access. Next Century Cities celebrates broadband successes in communities, demonstrates their value, and helps other cities to realize the full power of truly high-speed, affordable, and accessible broadband. For more information, visit www.nextcenturycities.org.