

Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass., and endorsed last week by Commerce Committee Chairman Henry Waxman of California. "It may be the case that legislation can be helpful in moving this process forward," Dorgan said. He expressed hope that Snowe, a Maine Republican, would join him in supporting the bill. Her office didn't comment Tuesday on her plans. Meanwhile, Free Press is pressing the case for net neutrality with the public. It's asking those in favor to add their names to messages the group is sending to Congress and the FCC to support new net neutrality rules. "More than 1.6 million people have already called on Washington to make net neutrality the law," said an e-mail that the group sent out. "We need a powerful, public show of support." -- *AV*

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The Copyright Alliance said it swiftly collected 7,500 signatures from a wide variety of artists in every state on a letter to President Barack Obama. The effort followed Obama's nomination of Victoria Espinel for U.S. coordinator of intellectual-property enforcement, a choice hailed by the copyright industries (CD Sept 28 p9). Early signers posted links to the document, at [CopyrightAlliance.org/letter](http://CopyrightAlliance.org/letter), on their social-media profiles and blogs, asking Obama to protect artists' rights, the alliance said Tuesday. The letter said artists are the "foundation of our communities," participating in schools, performance halls, libraries, museums, community centers and theaters. But their rights to control their works online "are dismissed by many who do not understand the value we bring to society," the letter said: "They tell us to work harder, create better, and give our works away." But without constitutionally protected works, "our ability to pursue our creative dreams and to meet the high expectations of those who benefit from our creative works is significantly diminished." The letter is also addressed to Vice President Joe Biden, who, as a senator, sponsored a bill to let the RIAA remotely attack the computers of suspected infringers. The letter asks Obama and Biden to pursue policies for artists' rights. The alliance's outreach director, Lucinda Dugger, said the "immediate and overwhelming response" to the letter "signals an awareness and frustration among artists across America that if they do not speak up, their rights will be eroded." A spokeswoman told us that no well-known artists had signed yet. Photographers are well represented among the signers. They've often complained that their works are particularly vulnerable to misuse online through the omission of credits from photos. There are also nearly 200 singers, songwriters and publishers, more than 600 authors and writers, and more than 100 illustrators, the spokeswoman said. Other signers include graphic designers, musicians, Web designers, game developers, voice actors and animators. The alliance said it plans to deliver the letter to the White House this fall. -- *GP*

## Broadband Stimulus Notes

The NTIA and the RUS activated an online broadband mapping tool that posts information about the proposed service areas for projects that grants are sought for (CD Sept 29 p1). The maps display the unserved and underserved areas where applicants are seeking funding to provide service, the agencies said. About 20 bodies have applied for mapping grants in West Virginia, a state where one-fifth of households don't have access to broadband, according to Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., who spoke at a broadband summit in his state Monday. Applicants include carriers, state and community organizations and technology firms, the database shows. Those already providing service aren't required to respond to public-notice filings, except to have their services considered in a decision on the eligibility of service areas proposed in grant applications, the agencies said. They said a provider replying to a notice proposing funding for service in multiple areas must file a separate response for each area. Providers have 30 days to file comments. The agencies said they won't accept responses on paper, and any paper submissions will be returned. -- *AV*

## Wireless

The Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions, in comments on the FCC's wireless innovation inquiry, asked the commission to consider the industry's technical-standards work. "ATIS has been working to facilitate the rollout of next generation network technologies," it said. "ATIS' Technology and Operations Council, which is comprised of some the industry's most senior technology officers and executives from leading communications companies, launched an Exploratory Group on Convergence that has produced a comprehensive analysis of the communications industry's ability to provide converged services over next generation networks. Additionally,

ATIS' TOPS Council convened a Next Generation Network Focus Group to address current and future next generation network standardization needs."

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Sprint Nextel representatives focused on "the licensing, hardware and system configurations of equipment on broadcast auxiliary service channels A8-10, particularly as they relate to Broadband Radio Service Channel 1," in a meeting with Chief Julius Knapp and others in the FCC Office of Engineering and Technology about the broadcast auxiliary service transition. "We also discussed the progress of the broadcast auxiliary service transition and the status of the negotiations with three New Mexico non-commercial educational licensees who have not yet executed frequency relocation agreements."

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The American Automobile Association asked drivers to take a pledge to put down their cellphones, stop snacking at the wheel and avoid other distractions for seven days. "Try it for a week; that's all we ask," the group. "We hope that by driving distraction-free for a week people can pick up the habit for life."

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CNN said it released an interactive iPhone application offering a visual approach to headlines. The application, priced at \$1.99, features live breaking news video, push notification, localization and personalization tools, user-generated content capture and upload capability through iReport.

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Thirty states and U.S. territories received over \$40 million in grants to help 911 call centers improve the ability to locate people calling from wireless and Internet-connected telephones, said the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and NTIA. The funds could be used to implement advanced technologies to deliver 911 calls with automatic crash location information as well as evacuation alerts to people using wireless services, warning them of dangerous situations like a bridge being washed out or a toxic spill.

## State Telecom Activities

Ohio legislators should vote down a telecom bill being considered in both houses, the state's consumer advocate said Tuesday. SB-162 and companion HB-276 "are industry-backed bills that would make significant changes to the pricing and oversight of Ohio's local telephone companies," the advocate's office said. The office and its allies oppose the measure's proposal to allow local phone companies to raise prices annually, they said. Enacting the bill would weaken consumer protections on service quality, customer credits, billing and deposits, while undercutting the Lifeline discount program and shifting costs to consumers, they said. Passage also would hamper efforts to provide all Ohioans with broadband access, the advocate said. "Ohioans across the state deserve fair and reasonably priced telephone service," Consumers' Counsel Janine Migden-Ostrander said. "Under the legislation, residential consumers could be left with higher prices while telephone companies would have less accountability for bad service." The bill offers "no real benefits for low-income consumers in the legislation, while the potential harms are substantial," said Ellis Jacobs of Advocates for Basic Legal Equality. "This bill all but assures that customers will be paying more and getting less." Enactment "would weaken the Lifeline program, which low-income Ohioans rely on to afford basic telephone service," said Phil Cole, executive director of the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies. "Low-income consumers on the Lifeline program would no longer be protected from increases to the price of basic local telephone service," said Joe Maskovyak of the Ohio Poverty Law Center. "Statewide, those who cannot make ends meet could pay more each year for their dial tone. In a struggling economy, this legislation sends one message to our poorest consumers: 'Pay up or hang up.'" The bill's primary sponsor, Republican Senator Steve Buehrer, said the changes that his measure proposes are crucial. "As the telecommunications industry continues to expand in Ohio, it is critical that our state's regulatory environment is fair, consistent and promotes competition between all phone providers in the state," Buehrer said. "This increased competition would help improve customer service, spur innovation and encourage companies to invest in new infrastructure and create high-tech jobs in Ohio's communities."

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Mississippi's Public Service Commission will consider imposing penalties on phone companies that fall short of customer service standards. Commissioners voted unanimously last week to begin proceedings to consider the requirements, commission member Brandon Presley, the proposal's sponsor, said Monday. "Almost every day I