

**From:** Phil Kim  
**To:** [CA Broadband Council](#)  
**Cc:** Gary Michelson  
**Subject:** Public Comment from Gary K. Michelson, M.D., Founder of the Michelson 20MM Foundation (20mm.org)  
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Good Morning Superintendent Thurmond and Esteemed Members of the Broadband Council,

Thank you for your tireless work to protect the students of California. My name is Gary Michelson, Founder of the Michelson 20MM Foundation ([20mm.org](https://20mm.org)) which has worked for over a decade advancing educational access, affordability, and equity.

As we are all aware, leaders in California and around the country are sounding the alarm at this most critical point in time that there is a digital divide that has left many people, particularly those of color and low income earners, without broadband access.

The FCC reports that 16% of school children are without any Internet connection, while 27% are without the broadband required to attend school remotely. But for low income people of color the situation is far worse, with nearly half without the needed service, and the lack of affordability most often given as the reason.

Nearly a century ago, President Franklin Roosevelt said that “electricity is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity. “ And indeed, the same is now true for broadband.

It has been the internet that has made it possible for so many people to work safely from their own homes. For those without work it is now the most relied on source for job information. For our nation’s more than 76,000,000 students now sentenced to remote learning it is essential. For the rest of us, who have it, we use it to make purchases, access information, obtain remote health care, and often to stay connected to our friends and family.

Now is the time to meet this challenge. Asking the major broadband providers to step up has failed, and California, as the fifth largest economy in the world, should not have to run around, tin cup in hand, begging.

Recently, Austin Buetner, who I respect greatly, published an op-ed in which he advocated for a tax on the “Haves” to pay for the “Have Nots.” So if you happened

to have heard much gleeful celebration and the tinkling of champagne glasses, that was the Internet providers celebrating what they anticipated would be even more money coming their way.

But there is another way. The state of California should issue an RFP, that is a Request For Proposal, to provide high speed Internet to every person in the state of California.

As a matter of background, while a limited number of Internet providers appear to be in competition, they are actually allied in their desire to maximize profits. That is to extract the maximum amount of revenue from each customer.

The RFP process is actually a reverse auction where the lowest bid wins. Each provider is then positioned at the intersection of greed and fear. The greed is that they would stand to profit mightily even at a substantially lower price by making up for it with the enormous volume. And, the fear is of being left out.

The advantages of such a proposal are many fold. No new taxes. Government would not be forcing anyone to do anything. Government would not be telling anyone what they can or cannot do. While everyone would have the right to access this low cost high speed Internet, no one would be forced to. People would be free to choose to stay with their present providers or even move to another one. Because the winner of the RFP would have unprecedented access into so many Californians homes it is quite possible that the winner might provide the broadband service as a loss leader just to have their foot in the door for the valuable telephone, television, and security services that are so often bundled.

Finally, this RFP will also be an RFI, that is a Request For Innovation. A trumpet call to our socially conscious inventors, innovators, and entrepreneurs who have shown that one can do well while doing good, to really shake things up, and to jump into the game.

Right now is the time to set aside low expectations and for our government in Sacramento to boldly move forward with all deliberate speed.

Regards,

Gary K. Michelson, M.D.