

## Digital Divide, Digital Literacy and Digital Injustice

**Campaign Update.** Over the past three Friday evenings, campaign volunteers attended the Belvedere Market Summer Sounds at the Square Festival. Last Friday two of our campaign leaders, Rosie Smith and Stan Wilson, answered questions and signed up new backers. On September 16 at 7 PM our leaders will attend the Federal Hill Neighborhood Association meeting and we have invitations to attend four other community meetings in the next month. We are eager to spread the word at any good size gathering whether it is a business association, a school parent association, a community or faith based gathering. Write to [BaltimoreBroadband@gmail.com](mailto:BaltimoreBroadband@gmail.com) to arrange.

We continue to address other frequently asked questions.

**What is the digital divide?** 30% of Americans do not connect to the Internet at home. The term digital divide refers to inequalities in digital access; as [reported by the Pew Research Center](#), broadband use at home varies markedly by income (88% ( $\geq$  \$75K) versus 54% ( $\leq$  \$30K)), education (89% (college graduates) versus 57% (high school graduates)), and race (74% (white non-Hispanic) versus 64% (Black non-Hispanic) versus 53% (Hispanic)).

**How is the digital divide relevant to Baltimore?** We already know the answer in light of the economic challenges our city faces. Still an example shows this is not an abstract issue. The Campaign was contacted by an organization doing workforce training on Monroe Street to see how they might participate in the campaign. In this community, the unemployment rate is 24% and for this organization, we heard that inadequate connectivity limits their ability to train. This is as important to Monroe Street as it is to Roland Avenue. Internet access is essential in the job market, for education and in remaining connected with friends. We use the Internet to find jobs, to apply for jobs and to train for jobs. Of the Fortune 500 companies, over 80% post jobs and accept job applications only on line.

**How is the Campaign addressing the digital divide?** First, we are elevating the importance of broadband issue. Baltimore has been left behind in comparison to surrounding regions. Second, reflecting the inclusiveness of the campaign, fiber deployment should occur throughout Baltimore because a neutral fiber network will allow competition for Internet services likely resulting in more choices and lower prices. Third, for those with low incomes, there should be low cost connectivity options. In [another study by Pew](#) among those who have not connected, 1/3 said the price would have to fall for them to consider doing so. Fourth, high priority for fiber deployment to anchor institutions including schools and libraries will address digital illiteracy. While digital access is essential, so is **digital literacy**, the understanding of why Internet access is important and how one actually connects. Only then, we as a city will succeed in facing the **digital injustice** that is currently present and about which we all care.

**Volunteers needed** with skills sets of graphic and web site design or willing to help staff our information table at community events. Contact us at [BaltimoreBroadband@gmail.com](mailto:BaltimoreBroadband@gmail.com)

**Please continue to spread the message that this campaign is important to join. Please forward this update to friends throughout the city. Join the Campaign at <http://crowdfiber.com/campaigns/baltimore-broadband-coalition>**

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If you prefer to join by mail, you can do so by writing a check for \$10 made out to the Baltimore Broadband Campaign and sending the check along with your name, address, email, phone number to: RPCL Office, 5115B Roland Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21210. If any trouble enrolling, ask for help at [BaltimoreBroadband@gmail.com](mailto:BaltimoreBroadband@gmail.com)