

STATEMENT
OF
SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE
VICE CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE
MAY 20, 2004 HEARING
ON S. 2382,
THE NATIVE AMERICAN CONNECTIVITY ACT

The Committee on Indian Affairs meets this morning to receive testimony on S. 2382, the Native American Connectivity Act.

This bill would provide support in the form of grants to tribal governments for the development of the necessary telecommunications infrastructure so that Native communities can have access to basic telephone service, the Internet, to broadband and wireless technology.

The Federal Communications Commission estimates, based on the 2000 census data, that on average, only 67.9 percent of Indian households on tribal reservations have telephone service.

That data also indicates that while telephone penetration rates vary from state to state, only 49.9 percent of Indian reservation households in Arizona have telephone service.

Even on reservations or Indian trust lands, non-Indian homes are more likely to

have telephone service than Indian homes.

Only ten percent of American Indian households on tribal lands have access to the Internet, and only 17 percent of the tribal governments across the nation have developed comprehensive technology plans.

A technology infrastructure study conducted a year before the 2000 census by the Economic Development Administration found that only 39 percent of rural Indian households had computers compared with 42 percent nationally, and 8 percent of Indian households had access to the Internet, compared with 26 percent nationally.

So these are the conditions that this bill seeks to address by providing the much-needed support to tribal governments that will enable them to bring their citizens and other residents of their communities into the 21st century.

Some of the witnesses scheduled to present testimony to the Committee today are not able to be here today, but we have the benefit of the presence of two very knowledgeable gentlemen who have worked extensively in Indian country on these issues, and we look forward to receiving their testimony.