

Jonathan Adelstein Bio, RUS



Jonathan S. Adelstein was nominated by President Obama and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate in July, 2009, to serve as the 17th Administrator of USDA's Rural Utilities Service. Mr. Adelstein previously served as Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission from 2002 to 2009.

A life-long public servant, Adelstein has dedicated his career to fighting for the public interest. As a Commissioner, he sought to secure access to communications for everyone, including those left behind by the market.

Adelstein is a strong advocate to improve rural telecommunications and broadband. To ensure that all consumers have access to the latest telecommunications services no matter where they live, he worked at the FCC to improve universal service. He advocated for a substantive national broadband strategy with aggressive goals and specific policy recommendations. He also actively promoted new policies that improve access to spectrum by both large and small companies so consumers can continue to maintain those connections in this increasingly mobile world. He was a key staff architect of expanding the Rural Utilities Service's authority to finance broadband services in the 2002 Farm Bill.

At the FCC, Adelstein fought for media diversity and localism, encouraging increased public access to the airwaves to support a well-informed citizenry. He promoted access to telecommunications and media outlets by minorities, rural and low-income consumers, people with disabilities, and non-English speakers. He encouraged broadcasters to use the digital transition to serve their communities with local, public affairs, and other cultural and educational programming.

Adelstein has served as a national leader on combating the negative effects of excessive commercialization in American media. He spearheaded vigorous enforcement against reported violations of federal payola rules – a scandal that may have represented the most widespread violations of any FCC rules in the history of American broadcasting. The investigation resulted in an historic settlement with major radio companies that established strong procedures to prevent future recurrences of pay-for-play practices. He has also been nationally recognized for his efforts to promote family-friendly media and fostering digital literacy among parents and children.

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Before joining the Commission, Adelstein served for fifteen years as a staff member in the United States Senate. For his final seven years, he was a senior legislative aide to then Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD), where he advised Senator Daschle on telecommunications, financial services, budget, housing, transportation and other key issues. Previously, he served as Professional Staff Member to Senate Special Committee on Aging Chairman David Pryor (D-AR), including an assignment as a special liaison to Senator Harry Reid (D-NV), and as a Legislative Assistant to Senator Donald W. Riegle, Jr. (D-MI).

Prior to his service in the Senate, Adelstein was a Teaching Fellow in the Department of History, Harvard University, while studying at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Adelstein also was a Teaching Assistant in the Department of History, Stanford University. He received an M.A. in History and a B.A. with Distinction in Political Science from Stanford. He also served as a Communications Consultant to the Stanford Graduate School of Business. He is a graduate of Phillips Academy, Andover, MA.

Adelstein was born and raised in Rapid City, South Dakota. He currently lives with his wife Karen and two children, Adam and Lexi, in the Washington, D.C. area.