FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE **CONTACT:**
Josh Vlasto
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(202) 224-7433

SCHUMER FIGHTS FOR NEW PLAN TO INSTALL BROADBAND OVER POWER LINES TO DELIVER HIGH SPEED INTERNET THROUGHOUT CENTRAL NEW YORK, ENTIRE NATIONAL GRID SERVICE AREA

Schumer Calls on Public Service Commission to Green Light New Pilot Project that Could Deliver Affordable High Speed Internet to Underserved and Rural Communities

Broadband Installed Over Power Lines Can Deliver New Connections Without the Huge Cost of New Infrastructure

With New York State Ranked 31st in Percentage of Households with an Internet Connection, High Speed Internet is the Life Blood of the 21st Century Economy

With many communities in Central New York and across upstate still without affordable and reliable connections to high-speed internet, today U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer called on the New York Public Service Commission (PSC) to grant approval for an innovative project in Central New York to install broadband capabilities via existing power lines. The joint project between Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation (NIMO) and New Visions Powerline Communications Inc. (NVPC) would utilize new technology that could bring broadband service to the most remote communities without enormous cost.

"Arts, culture, news, entertainment, politics and more – in a world that is increasingly reliant on high-speed, easily accessible Internet, not having high speed Internet access is like not having air to breathe," said Schumer. "To rebuild upstate's economy we simply must have a first-class information infrastructure that includes universal high speed internet access. The problem is that it is still very expensive to deliver this vital service to remote and underserved communities. The pilot project offers enormous hope to families and businesses, which need to connect to the information superhighway. Central New York is the ideal place to host this pilot program and I look forward to working with state, local, and community leaders to ensure this project is a success and can be spread throughout the state."

Schumer said that broadband and high speed Internet is the lifeblood of the new economy and it is more important than ever that every community has access to this important technology. However, laying broadband fiber-optic cables the so-called "last mile" can be prohibitively expensive and as a result many communities are without such service. With too many parts of New York State, particularly upstate, facing such obstacles, installing broadband capability over existing power lines reduces such costs dramatically.

The pending agreement between NIMO and NVPC holds particular promise for many people living is rural or even small to mid-size communities that currently lack broadband service. "Broadband over powerlines (BPL) is an exciting new option that has the capability of bringing broadband to virtually any place that has electrical power," said Schumer.

BPL works by sending encoded micro-voltages of electrical energy that represent information-content that is transmitted over power lines. Small transformers hung from utility poles would reduce the strength of transmission and connect the signal directly to a group of homes and/or businesses. A home or business would only need to plug a small device into an outlet to receive the transmissions.

Schumer said that, if the Public Service Commission green lights the project, municipalities could work with NVCP so both consumer and local governments could have full access their services. BPL also has the capacity to be used in several homeland security and public safety applications along the NIMO grid, such as real time closed circuit TV monitoring.

Schumer also noted that as this leasing agreement could represent the most widescale deployment BPL in New York State, the Public Service Commission (PSC) would need to closely monitor the technologies phased implementation and ensure that National Grid and their ratepayers are not subsidizing this service. Furthermore, he asked that NIMO and NVPC put a premium on protecting the safety of workers who install these systems.

BPL received approval from the Federal Communications Commission in 2004 and since then many states, from Virginia to California, have begun to approve its deployment.

In his letter to the Commissioners, Schumer wrote, "given BPL's potential to enhance economic development and homeland security, as well as to offer greater choice to consumers, I believe the Public Service Commission should approve the current application."