



# NEWS

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**Federal Communications Commission**  
**445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, S.W.**  
**Washington, D. C. 20554**

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
November 9, 2000

## **Press Statement of FCC Chairman William E. Kennard Regarding Part 68 Streamlining**

Today, I am very pleased to participate in what will likely be the largest streamlining of our rules in my tenure as Chairman. One hundred thirty pages of detailed technical criteria that manufacturers must follow when they manufacture equipment, such as faxes or modems, will be replaced by a few pages of straightforward guidelines.

Our policy requiring phone companies to permit customers to plug equipment, such as modems, into the phone network is a success story because it established the framework to what is today a robust competitive market for customer premises equipment. The FCC's rules also have long played a needed role in ensuring that equipment produced by the almost overwhelming number of competing manufacturers does not harm the telephone network itself or technicians who work on the network. We have revised our rules often over the years, but, with the lightning-fast pace of technological advances, we have found that we are sometimes unable to keep up that pace ourselves. We must not, through our rules and processes, become a bottleneck to the introduction of new, advanced technologies and services.

We therefore will hand over the function of setting these standards to the manufacturers of consumer equipment. I want to stress that we are in no way shirking our responsibility to assure that the telephone network continues to function safely and at the highest levels of performance possible: we will continue to enforce our overarching rules regarding safety and service. What we are doing today is getting out of the business of caring for every single tree, and instead will oversee the health of the forest. Our action today meets our goals both of protecting the network and of ensuring the rapid introduction of exciting new technologies.

We do retain, however, important parts of our rules. For example, we keep our rules that ensure that people with hearing aids are able to use all telephones. Deregulating is important, but we must continue to ensure that all Americans with disabilities have access to telecommunications services. These rules are too important, and I believe that, without them, the marketplace would not necessarily ensure the high level of quality they deserve.

As I have frequently stated, this Commission should shift from writing rules to enforcing them. Rather than establishing detailed, inelastic, prophylactic rules, the Commission should look to establish overarching policies with a strong enforcement mechanism should market forces fail to protect consumers' interests. This item should become a template for future regulation -- and deregulation -- by this Commission.