

**SEPARATE STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER KEVIN J. MARTIN**

Re: Inquiry Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability to All Americans in a Reasonable and Timely Fashion, and Possible Steps to Accelerate Such Deployment Pursuant to Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Third Notice of Inquiry, CC Docket No. 98-146

Today, the Commission commences its third inquiry under section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which directs the Commission to encourage the deployment of advanced telecommunications capability to “all Americans,” to determine whether such capability is being deployed in a reasonable and timely fashion, and, if not, to take immediate action to accelerate deployment. In enacting this provision, Congress made clear that deployment of advanced services is critically important to our nation.

I write separately in strong support of today’s item. Encouraging deployment of advanced services should be a priority of the Commission, and I am pleased that this is one of the first items to come before me as a Commissioner. Such deployment is essential to our nation’s growth in the 21st century, as it dramatically reduces the cost of exchanging information, enables “local” businesses to provide services to the entire world, and provides numerous and innovative services to consumers.

Advanced services are particularly important to rural communities. High speed data connections enable people in remote parts of the country to have access to the educational materials of large universities, the healthcare resources of our best hospitals, and business opportunities all over the world. Thus, I am happy to learn that, although rural communities still lag behind urban communities, these gaps are closing. We must ensure that this growth in access continues and fulfill Congress’ mandate to encourage deployment of advanced services to “all Americans.”

I am anxious to hear from a range of voices in this proceeding on how the Commission can further promote deployment of advanced services. This will be one of my central priorities as a Commissioner, and I am pleased to begin my tenure with this inquiry.