

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER

MICHAEL J. COPPS

December 11, 2002

RE: Facilitating the Provision of Spectrum-Based Services to Rural Areas and Promoting Opportunities for Rural Telephone Companies To Provide Spectrum-Based Services.

I would like to thank the Chairman for initiating this NOI. In several of the Commission's spectrum management and auction decisions over the past year, I have remarked, as have my colleagues, on the need to increase our focus on the rural dimensions of what we do. We certainly operate under a clear and heavy statutory obligation to bring the benefits of spectrum-based services to rural America.

In response, the Chairman agreed to initiate this important proceeding. In it we seek comment on how to improve our spectrum policy so that it better serves rural consumers. We ask about the need for a rural bidding credit for auctions to spur development. We explore how the geographic size of licenses affects the ability of companies to bring service to rural communities and whether we should use RSAs in more cases. We ask whether our rules that require carriers to build out their networks in order to keep their license allow build-out that excludes rural areas. The list goes on.

The next step is for rural America to raise its voice. Consumer groups, carriers, local governments, State Commissions, and individuals now have the chance to tell us how we should change our rules so as to improve wireless service in rural areas. This is your chance. Don't waste it. Please send in detailed comments with specific ideas, complaints, data -- even praise where its due! The notice and comment process is sometimes the only eyes and ears we have at the Commission. So make yourself be seen and heard.