

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

Re: Facilitating the Provision of Spectrum-Based Services to Rural Areas and Promoting Opportunities for Rural Telephone Companies To Provide Spectrum-Based Services, Notice of Inquiry, WT Docket No. 02-381

I am pleased to support this item. Promoting the deployment of services to rural America is one of the Commission's most important priorities. Consumers living in rural areas may lack opportunities to access telecommunications services comparable to those found in more urban areas, and those services that are available may be offered at higher prices. The Commission should, indeed must, work to address these disparities in all areas of telecommunications. In doing so, the Commission must work to ensure that rural Americans have access to reasonably comparable services at reasonably comparable rates to those found in urban areas.

With respect to wireless services, the Commission has explicit obligations to promote the development and rapid deployment of wireless services in rural areas, as well as to ensure that rural telephone companies have a meaningful opportunity to provide spectrum-based services. Specifically, section 309 of the Communications Act directs the Commission, in designing systems of licensing through competitive bidding, to promote "the development and rapid deployment of new technologies, products, and services for the benefit of the public, including those residing in rural areas, without administrative or judicial delays." 47 U.S.C. § 309(j)(3)(A). Section 309 also requires the Commission to ensure that "rural telephone companies" "are given the opportunity to participate in the provision of spectrum-based services, and, for such purposes, [to] consider the use of tax certificates, bidding preferences, and other procedures." *Id.* § 309(j)(4)(D).¹

I take these obligations very seriously and am pleased that the Commission has opened this inquiry into how we can better fulfill them. I am hopeful that this proceeding will provide us with not only information on how well our current policies are working, but also on what we could do to address more effectively the needs of rural communities. To that end, I strongly encourage parties to participate in this proceeding. The more comprehensive data we can gather, the better we can tailor our policies to promote rural deployment and ensure that rural telephone companies have a meaningful opportunity to provide spectrum-based services. As wireless technologies continue to advance, the Commission must make certain that all Americans are given an opportunity to participate in these developments, especially those Americans living in rural areas. I look forward to moving ahead in this proceeding.

¹ That provision requires the Commission to provide the same opportunity to "small businesses" and "businesses owned by members of minority groups and women," which are also important Commission priorities. 47 U.S.C. § 309(j)(4)(D).