

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRMAN MICHAEL K. POWELL**

*Re: Modification of Parts 2 and 15 of the Commission's Rules for Unlicensed Devices and Equipment Approval; Notice of Proposed Rulemaking; ET Docket No. 03-201.*

One of the Commission's most important goals is to provide the opportunity for innovative communications technologies to take hold and take off. Wireless broadband services using unlicensed devices are doing just that.

Earlier this week, I had the opportunity to see first-hand a rural wireless broadband network in Bluemont, Virginia. Using a network made up of entirely unlicensed devices, Roadstar Internet provides wireless broadband services to both commercial and residential customers. Roadstar is literally a mom and pop operation, run by Marty and Rose Dougherty, and headquartered in a barn behind their home. Many of Roadstar's subscribers previously had no broadband option. Now in Bluemont, a local company can market its products over the Internet, students can benefit from distance learning, and local workers can telecommute.

What's exciting about all of this is that wireless internet service providers (WISPs), like Roadstar, are springing up all over the country – from Bluemont, Virginia to Coffman Cove, Alaska. It's the dawn of a new facilities-based broadband industry; a new industry spawned in part by the Commission's unlicensed rules.

Wireless networking is also a critical component for enterprise communications. And, indeed, this market segment accounts for most of the total sales of wireless equipment. It is estimated that by the year 2005, sales will exceed \$5 billion. Clearly, wireless networking is one of the strongest engines in the current communications economy.

The Notice we adopt today is a significant step in providing even more opportunities for the wireless networking industry, including WISPs, to continue to grow. We are clearing the way for deployment of advanced antenna technologies. At the same time, we are providing manufacturers and operators more flexibility in our equipment authorization process.

So that progress in this direction can continue, next Thursday we are holding a rural WISP showcase and workshop. Participants will be discussing many of the technical, regulatory, and business "how-tos" associated with starting and running a WISP. One of the highlights of the workshop will be a session focusing on the varied services made available through wireless broadband provided by WISPs – from telemedicine to distance learning to community networking.

And there is more progress on the way. This fall we plan to examine the potential innovation available through the use of cognitive radios – including reviewing the possibility of permitting unlicensed devices to operate at higher powers under certain circumstances, which may be especially important for rural communities. We also plan to issue a Report and Order making an additional 255 MHz of unlicensed spectrum available at 5 GHz – this is one area of the spectrum currently being used by WISPs, including Roadstar, and the additional spectrum will provide them with even more opportunities for growth. We continue to explore the possibilities for additional unlicensed spectrum use at 3.6 GHz and in the television bands.

Wireless broadband has the potential to be an important catalyst for positive change. From barnyards to boardrooms, wireless networking brings the benefits of broadband communications where people need them. The Commission's action today is an important step in facilitating this change.