

**Remarks of
FCC Chairman Michael Powell
At the
FCC RURAL WIRELESS ISP SHOWCASE AND WORKSHOP
November 4, 2003
Washington, D.C.**

Thank you to all of you for attending this important FCC Showcase and discussion of wireless broadband service in Rural America.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank Georg Serentschy, Director of the Austrian Regulatory Authority for Broadcasting and Telecommunications for joining us today.

Ensuring that all Americans are connected and have access to advanced telecommunications service is a core goal at the heart of the Commission's mission as defined by Congress in the Communications Act.

This Commission has put a high priority on making sure that Americans living and working in rural communities have access to the same kind of high quality infrastructure that is available in urban and suburban America.

The people in this room are the embodiment of my goals for this Commission – you are facilities-based broadband providers competing in the marketplace taking advantage of our deregulatory spectrum policies. The opportunities in rural America are real – and the folks in this room are taking advantage of them.

I recently was able to see this first hand when I traveled to Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains where I saw an example of what your entrepreneurial spirit and new technologies can deliver for rural consumers and businesses.

Today, a new generation of wireless technologies is making broadband service technically feasible at reasonable costs and affordable rates.

That's why we are here today -- to showcase and hear from more than a dozen wireless ISPs—WISPs—who are springing up all over the country – from the Catskill Mountains in New York to Coffman Cove, Alaska - and who are using a wide range of both licensed and license-exempt diverse technologies to provide broadband service to rural consumers and businesses.

What we are going to hear about today is:

- how wireless technologies—licensed and unlicensed—destroy the tyranny of high cost networks in low density areas.
- how a variety of technology approaches, business models, applications, and government programs can help foster rural wireless broadband;
- how our rules and regulations impact rural WISP deployment; and,

- what we can do to further the deployment of these new networks and the beneficial services that use them.

This Commission has redoubled its efforts to develop policies that enhance communications services in rural America. We partnered with Rural Utility Service to facilitate government support for rural communications, and we recently adopted two Notices of Proposed Rulemaking designed to foster advanced telecommunications in rural America:

- First, the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau's NPRM on how we can clarify rules to minimize regulatory costs and provide incentives to serve rural markets; and
- Second, the Office of Engineering and Technology's NPRM on modified power limits, new technologies such as smart antennas, and streamlined equipment approval.

And our work continues. We recently completed our 3G proceeding and will conclude our rulemaking to make additional spectrum available at 5 GHz. In addition, we will soon conclude a proceeding to reform the MMDS/ITFS spectrum to reflect the current marketplace and technological capabilities.

We are committed more than ever to bringing the benefits of 21st Century communications capabilities to rural America.

I know that some of you have come very long distances at your own expense to share your experiences with others who are providing wireless broadband or with others who want to serve their local communities.

I also want to especially thank the Rural Utility Service at the Department of Agriculture for their participation and cooperation in today's workshop. We have built a strong partnership with the RUS over the last year and appreciate their support in our shared responsibility to bring rural America the best possible communications.

Finally, I want to thank the fine Commission staff under the leadership of Robert Pepper, Ed Thomas and John Muleta who have made this Showcase possible.

Technology holds the answer and this forum is just one installment in our efforts to bring that vision to America and have us prosper in the 21st Century.

I'm excited you're here, and thank you for your participation.