

**AS PREPARED**

**Remarks by Commissioner Kevin J. Martin  
Federal Communications Commission  
To the CompTel/ASCENT 2004 Spring Convention and Exposition  
Anaheim, CA  
February 8, 2004**

Thank you, Russell, for that kind introduction. Tonight, I am honored to receive your “Champion of Competition” award.

I also wish to congratulate the other “Champion of Competition” recipient, George Vinal. Throughout the debate in our consideration of the Triennial decision, George argued vigorously and forcefully to protect the future of local competition. His knowledge, experience, and advocacy proved to be a great benefit for the competitive telecom sector.

Upon arriving at the Convention this afternoon, I took a quick tour of the exhibition hall. It has reinforced the importance of the critical mission to promote local competition and the widespread deployment of broadband facilities and services in the nation’s infrastructure.

**Triennial Proceeding**

Last year, the battle was to preserve local competition in the Triennial Review decision. I believe that decision achieves a principled, balanced approach. It ensures that we have competition and deregulation. We deregulate broadband, where there is competition from cable, making it easier for companies to invest in new equipment and deploy the high-speed services that consumers desire. We preserve existing competition for local telephone service—the competition that has enabled millions of consumers to benefit from lower telephone rates. And we accomplish these goals in a manner that is consistent with the statute and the rulings of the courts.

Where facilities-based competition exists—for example, from cable modems in the broadband market or competitors in the business market—the Order deregulates. Where competition is still dependent on use of the incumbent’s network, the Order requires that competitors be allowed access to the necessary parts of that network so that they can continue to provide phone service to consumers.

I believe these steps have benefited consumers and the industry just as the 1996 envisioned.

Today, more than 17 million local customers are using unbundled network elements. Telecom competition has created 77,000 new jobs and generated \$150 billion of investment in the marketplace.

Residential consumers are experiencing the price benefits. Many are paying 30% less for the same or similar telecom services--saving \$15 per month on average, and saving \$10 billion per year because of local telecom competition. As in other markets, competitors are spurring the incumbents to provide better services, at low prices, in more attractive bundles.

Unfortunately, the battle to preserve local competition is far from over. Indeed, I believe it is more tenuous today that it was a year ago. The local competition rules are under attack in Washington. Many predict that the federal court will soon derail the rules that provide you access to incumbents local legacy networks. And momentum is building for broad based reform of the 1996 Act.

Policy-makers in Washington are not debating the benefits of your services. They are only debating how much of the rules should be eliminated or how they should be changed. No one is hearing a message of the benefits you are bringing to your customers, the consumers, or the economy through increased competition.

If you have a message to deliver, your time is now. Momentum is building the other way. Speak now or forever hold your peace. You must now be your own champions.

Let me be clear: I am proud to have stood up for what I believe was right and fought to preserve competition. But if you want to preserve competition, the fight is now up to you. And you are losing.

I look forward to discussing these challenges this evening and continuing the dialogue on how to continue to promote local competition in the months ahead.

Thank you.