

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

Re: *Inquiry Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability to All Americans in a Reasonable and Timely Fashion, and Possible Steps to Accelerate Such Deployment Pursuant to Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996*

I will spare you another iteration of my broadband thoughts because most of you have heard me talk about how I believe broadband is the central infrastructure challenge facing this generation. High capacity networks are to the Twenty-first century what the roads and canals and railroads were to the Nineteenth and highways and telecommunications were to the Twentieth. Our future will be driven by how quickly and how well we build out broadband connectivity to all our people. Our role here needs to be as proactive as possible and I believe Section 706 gives us wide-ranging authority to both study and act on broadband deployment.

People all around the country are waking up to the economic opportunity that broadband availability provides. A few months ago, I spent time in Cleveland with a coalition devoted to reducing the digital opportunity gap for city residents. They are working with schools and local officials in a project known as OneCleveland. Together they are developing a backbone infrastructure to enhance economic opportunity and education in city neighborhoods. They know that access to broadband is critical to the future of their community and the future of the country and they are doing something about it.

I am pleased that we are beginning our next Section 706 inquiry today. I have been advocating this for some time. Good data is a prerequisite for good policy choices. So I hope our questions here will generate the serious and substantive analysis that the subject merits.

I have had problems—methodological and otherwise—with the approach the Commission took in the past with this inquiry. I thought our questions were not sufficiently probing and our conclusions were not supported by the facts. We all applaud the build out of broadband, but being number 11 in the world doesn't indicate to me that our deployment is either reasonable or timely. Other countries are getting a lot more capacity to a lot more people at a lot lower cost than we are. If this isn't a call to action, I don't know what is.

So, for starters, we need to engage stakeholders of all stripes—from community organizations like the ones I met with in Cleveland to carriers large and small; from equipment manufacturers to state and local governments; from entrepreneurs with innovative ideas to experts on the economics of network development. We need to dig deep, beyond cursory zip code data and outdated 200 kilobit standards for advanced service. We have to figure out who is being left behind and why and then articulate a plan to fill in the deployment gaps we identify. This task is not small. But I am

optimistic that today's inquiry is a first step in what must be a broad and substantial effort.

I want to thank the Bureau for accommodating some of the concerns I have expressed in the past and for broadening and deepening the inquiry. I look forward to our putting the record to good and productive use to ensure that no American is left behind in the broadband revolution.