

**Remarks of
Michael K. Powell
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
At the
Network Reliability and Interoperability Council Meeting
Washington, D.C.
March 30, 2004**

First I'd like to take a moment to welcome you as members of NRIC, both those of you that are returning and those that have recently joined. Thank you for making the commitment to serve on the seventh Network Reliability and Interoperability Council.

I also want to offer my special thanks to Tim Donahue for assuming the role of Chairman. His Chairmanship is a significant first – the first time a wireless company has assumed this leadership role – it is both testimony to the growing importance of wireless networks and Tim's leadership in particular that we are here today with Tim at the helm. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Nancy Carlsen, who will serve as chair of the NRIC Steering Committee. Her behind-the-scenes work will be invaluable in making NRIC VII a reality.

Federal agencies use advisory committees like NRIC for a variety of purposes, but over the years NRIC has stood the test of time and has come to be recognized within government and in the industry as a role model for successful public/private partnership. Since I became Chairman, NRIC has addressed a variety of critical issues effectively, from network reliability to Y2K to homeland security. This record of accomplishment gives me tremendous pride and confidence as we charge this seventh council with solving new problems.

In this time of heightened national concern for public safety it is only proper for us to focus a large portion of NRIC's energy on the reliability and security of our Nation's emergency services communications networks. The limitations of our existing E911 implementations are well known and documented in a report produced by my friend and colleague Dale Hatfield. I am committed to addressing the issues raised in that report, and I think NRIC is the right place to take up the technical topics.

As you'll see in the charter, we're asking questions regarding near-term deployments as well as long-term evolution, including the use of packet technology to enhance emergency service functionality. Very recently I convened a group of leaders in the emergency services field, several of whom I recognize around the table today. Its purpose was to dig into possible solutions to the delivery of E911 services over VoIP networks, and I encourage this Council to build on the results, which are available online and will be provided directly to the NRIC Steering Committee.

We've tried to be specific in the charter about our objectives; now we'd like you to come together as communications industry experts to help move our E911 systems to new levels of sophistication and reliability. When we're finished, I'm hoping we'll have agreed on deployable solutions that improve public safety communications today and for generations to come.

We are engaged in a war against terror. We have asked this Council to continue the work of NRIC VI – to examine the homeland security best practices that have been available for the past year, follow-up on issues that were identified by the previous Council, and improve the best practices to better fortify our critical communications infrastructure.

Even as homeland security concerns loom, the reliability of communications networks under normal circumstances cannot escape our attention. NRIC has a long history of producing best practices in this area. When NRIC was first formed more than ten years ago the participants were primarily wireline carriers. Over the years, we have grown the Council to reflect the diversity in our industry. Now we would like to invite these new entities, particularly wireless carriers and Internet service providers, to identify voluntary best practices that could apply to their circumstances.

Broadband holds tremendous promise for service innovation and economic growth. NRIC can help us by recommending ways to promote the deployment of alternative broadband technologies and helping to ensure interoperability of broadband services. I am enthusiastic about the broadband future and look forward to your help in this area.

As you can see, we'll be busy for the next couple of years. But remember that you are part of an institution with strong roots and a proud heritage. You are doing important work and I commend you once again for your willingness to serve.

Thank you to everyone gathered here today for serving to make our nation's critical infrastructure more reliable and more secure.

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