

**SEPARATE STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN**

Re: Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism, Fifth Report and Order and Order, CC Docket No. 02-6.

Since its inception in 1996, the universal service support mechanism for schools and libraries (commonly referred to as the E-rate program) has opened up a new world of learning and opportunity for millions of school children and library patrons. It has proven an enormously successful educational initiative. The E-Rate program has allowed us to achieve remarkable results in connecting classrooms and libraries in rural and urban areas to the Internet and connecting America's schoolchildren to the Information Age. By strengthening our schools and libraries, we have given our children access to the tools that they need – that we, as a nation, need -- to compete and succeed in an increasingly global economy.

To ensure the continued success of the E-Rate program, we must remain committed to monitoring, auditing, reviewing and reinforcing the program. This Order demonstrates our commitment to the program and to its integrity. We take important steps here to further our ongoing effort to safeguard against waste, fraud, and abuse. The measures we adopt bolster our audit processes, which are essential to the oversight of the universal service fund, and they respond to programmatic concerns raised by our Office of Inspector General. The Order also sets into motion a process for reviewing USAC administrative procedures, which will afford the Commission the opportunity to ensure the transparency, effectiveness, and efficiency of the program's administration. The item also provides useful guidance on the content and approval of Technology Plans, which are used by applicants to assess and plan for their telecommunications needs.

This Order represents one important part of a larger effort to ensure the integrity and success of the E-Rate program. Through this Order and our previous Orders adopted in the past two years, we are working to safeguard against waste, fraud, and abuse, and, at the same time, to simplify and clarify the application process, so that we don't set up unnecessary obstacles for deserving applicants. As this item recognizes, our job is not done. Nevertheless, we take important steps forward in this Order. I appreciate the commitment of my colleagues, USAC, the service providers, and the schools and libraries, as we continue to advance these intertwined goals.