

Statement of Commissioner Michael J. Copps, Dissenting



America's competitors around the world are implementing comprehensive broadband plans. Countries like Japan, Korea, and Canada have left us far behind. This is unacceptable. Broadband is our central infrastructure challenge. High-capacity networks are to the Twenty-first century what roads, canals and railroads were to the Nineteenth and highways and basic telecommunications were to the Twentieth. Our economy and our future will be driven by how quickly and completely we deploy broadband.

That is why Congress charged the FCC with promoting broadband deployment for all Americans—whether they live in rural areas, inner cities or tribal lands; whether they are affluent or of limited income; whether they live with or without disabilities. Recently, we heard an announcement from the very top of our government that our goal is universal broadband access by 2007. But we are not making acceptable progress toward that goal. Yes, there are good stories in these glossy pages. Schools and libraries enjoy broadband access like never before. New technologies offer new promise. Strides are being made in some rural communities. Companies are working hard.

Still, one glaring fact stands out: the United States is ranked eleventh in the world in broadband penetration! This Report somehow finds that this is acceptable, and that our efforts are resulting in timely deployment. I think our efforts are insufficient and that broadband deployment is insufficient, so I dissent to this Report.

When consumers in other countries get so much more bang for their broadband buck than we do, something has to change. Nothing puts our challenge

into more vivid relief than Chart 18 in this Report. In Japan, for as little as \$10, consumers get broadband service at 8,000 kbps. In Korea, consumers get 10,000 kbps for the same price that we pay for 1,500 kbps. Consumers elsewhere get great prices for revolutionary speeds. Why, then, is the FCC still collecting data about 200 kbps service and calling it broadband? Our dated definition of broadband speed should have been dropped by the wayside long ago. We also claim that broadband is available to everyone in a zip code if it is offered to only one person in that zip code. This half-hearted effort at analyzing availability should be scrapped. Correcting these approaches for the *next* Report is neither reasonable nor timely.

We should also study in exhaustive detail the broadband strategies of other countries to discover what works and what applicability such strategies may have for our country. We should study why numerous municipalities across America are floating bonds to develop their own broadband networks. We should look at what universal service means in the IP age. We need a better handle on all these things—if we want to pull ourselves out of the broadband ditch and into the digital stratosphere.

The history of great infrastructure developments in this country is a tale of private sector-public sector partnership. In broadband, business will lead the way—as it should. But there is a role for government, too—a statutorily mandated role totally in keeping with how this country historically built its infrastructure. When we find ourselves eleventh in the world, something has gone dreadfully wrong. When Congress tells us to take immediate action to accelerate deployment, we have an obligation to do it. When the highest reaches of government aim for universal broadband by 2007, we need a strategy to meet that goal. I see none here.

