

**Opening Remarks of FCC Chairman Kevin J. Martin  
at the Federal Communications Commission's  
Independent Panel on Hurricane Katrina  
January 30, 2006**

**(As Prepared for Delivery)**

Welcome to the first meeting of the independent panel reviewing the impact of Hurricane Katrina on communications networks. I want to thank everyone for taking time out of their busy schedules to volunteer their time and energy to this important task.

I'd also like to thank my colleagues on the Commission – Commissioner Copps, Commissioner Adelstein, and Commissioner Tate – for supporting this independent panel. They have all been very supportive of these efforts, and I appreciate their help. On behalf of the Commissioners, I also would like to thank Nancy Victory for agreeing to Chair the panel. I know that this effort will benefit from her knowledge and experience.

This is a unique endeavor. Today, for the first time, we're bringing together experts from all sectors of the communications industry – wireline and wireless, broadcast and cable, satellite and terrestrial service providers, and equipment providers – to study the impact of a disaster and develop recommendations to improve our response and recovery efforts for the future. The Commission has had great success bringing together industry representatives to study network reliability, security, and resiliency issues in the past, and we hope to build upon this success by bringing all these communications providers together in one comprehensive forum.

This independent panel is unique in another way, too. Not only does it bring together leading experts from all sectors of the industry, it also brings public safety organizations directly into the heart of the process. Leading public safety officials will be working side-by-side with industry representatives to identify the lessons learned and develop recommendations for improvements. Because emergency response personnel are on the front lines during times of crisis, it is very important that the public safety community has an opportunity to provide its unfiltered views and to contribute to developing recommendations for improving communications in the future.

I would also like to thank the representatives from the NAACP and LULAC for their participation on the panel. As we have learned from the recent disasters, community based input is critical to address issues of emergency preparedness and response.

Together, these experts will study the impact of Hurricane Katrina on all sectors of the communications industry, including public safety communications; review the sufficiency and effectiveness of the recovery effort; and make recommendations to the Commission on ways to improve disaster preparedness, network reliability and resilience, and communications among emergency responders.

The awful damage caused by the worst natural disaster in the nation's history underscored the importance of communications networks for response, relief, and recovery

efforts. The work of the experts gathered here today should help us all learn from this terrible experience so that we will be better prepared when the next crisis strikes.

Because of the importance of this work, we have asked that the independent panel submit a final report to the Commission by June. Again, I'd like to thank you all for your service on this panel. We all stand ready to assist the panel in any way that we can, and we look forward to seeing the results of your good work in June.

Thank you.