

**Remarks of FCC Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
At the Federal Communications Commission's
Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina
January 30, 2006**

Welcome to the Federal Communications Commission. I really wish that I could be with you today, but I am glad to be able to extend this personal greeting to you as you begin this important job, not only for the FCC, for our country.

When the hurricanes hit the Gulf Coast, I was back home in Tennessee, and like many of you, it took days to track down close friends and our state colleagues. Through them I was able to hear first hand of the devastation – devastation many of you faced.

I recall a conversation with a former state colleague in which he described the devastation caused by the hurricane, specifically that three towns had been wiped off the face of the earth. This emotional conversation has stayed with me and that is why your work is so very crucial. Because the FCC oversees major infrastructures that are critical to the nation's ability to respond to natural disasters and other emergencies, we must continue to learn from these events and prepare for tomorrow.

I would like to share just a note of praise for the FCC. When contacted by a carrier to assist following Hurricane Katrina, I gladly called the FCC offices on a Friday night thinking I would be leaving a voice mail – only to discover that the staff was working around the clock to take immediate action to assist in any way possible to restore communications for the public safety operations, for the media, for businesses, hospital and all types of relief efforts, and for individuals to locate their loved ones.

I send my heartfelt thanks to Nancy Victory for her leadership – and to each of you – many of whom I have worked with in Tennessee – and look forward to receiving your recommendations which, I hope, will include recommendations for those with special needs.

Have a good and productive meeting and, again, many thanks.