

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

Re: Implementing a Nationwide, Broadband, Interoperable Public Safety Network in the 700 MHz Band; Development of Operational, Technical and Spectrum Requirements for Meeting Federal, State and Local Public Safety Communications Requirements through the Year 2010, Ninth Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, (PS Docket No. 06-229, WT Docket No. 96-86).

As I have said many times, the safety of the people must always be the first and foremost responsibility of government. We are now over five years out from the tragedy of 9/11 and over a year since Hurricane Katrina, and we know this: America is not as ready as it could be and should be for the next attack or natural disaster, whenever that awful day should come. And that sad truth is not because there are any real disagreements about the policy objectives here with respect to our nation's heroic first responders. Everyone understands the need to provide the nation's first responders with interoperable equipment when they charge into a burning building or perform the thousands of other dangerous tasks each year that keep us safe. Everyone understands the importance of making sure that these dedicated public servants have the resources and funding they need to keep us – and themselves – out of harm's way. And everyone understands that public safety providers must be able to avail themselves of all the extraordinary advances that high-tech companies and commercial providers have made in network architecture and advanced hardware.

Today's NPRM attempts to address these objectives by proposing an inventive public safety model – the creation of a nationwide, interoperable broadband public safety communications network in the 700 MHz band. Specifically, the NPRM seeks comment on whether a national licensee can create such a network through a public-private arrangement, whereby commercial providers would assist public safety agencies in implementing this network.

As I have stated before, government-commercial sharing of public safety spectrum raises a host of complex technical and policy questions – the margin for error is uniquely low, and we must be exceptionally confident that there are no unintended consequences flowing from any actions we approve. At the same time, given the long-standing need for reform in this area, we simply cannot afford to ignore innovative ideas that could potentially revolutionize existing public safety spectrum management. I therefore applaud the Chairman's initiative in seeking comment on this proposal. Thanks also to the staff of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for preparing and presenting this thoughtful NPRM. I look forward to reading comments from interested and knowledgeable stakeholders, who can help this agency sort through the important and technically complex questions raised by today's item.