

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER ROBERT McDOWELL**

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

I commend the Chairman and his staff for finding a way to leverage E-Rate funds in a manner that will allow for wider broadband use without requiring additional universal service funds to be expended. This order, and proposed rules, are modeled after a concept that first emerged in Alaska. In that instance, a waiver of our rules had been granted to allow some remote schools in Alaska to make their networks available to the general public after school hours, on the weekends, during the holidays and throughout summer breaks. It makes sense to open up this opportunity to all communities in our country. Our action will empower schools to allow members of their communities to use the schools' Internet access for purposes such as higher education, job searches and on-line access to government services.

Two principles are key to this proposal's success. First, it is imperative that educational purposes should always get first priority when E-Rate infrastructure is used and, as such, the additional use by the general public should truly be "incidental." The fact that the decision to open up the use of a school's Internet to the general public is left to the sole discretion of the schools will help facilitate this goal. Second, the change in our rules should not inadvertently put an increased demand on the E-Rate program. It should not provide a backdoor way for schools to request more funds than necessary to support their student populations, and any upcoming audits should be designed in a manner to foreclose such actions.

During these challenging economic times, it is more important than ever that our nation find ways to be efficient with our resources, and this proposal will help in that effort. I thank all involved in this matter.