STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN

RE: ***Amendment of Parts 2 and 95 of the Commission's Rules to Provide Additional Spectrum for the Medical Device Radiocommunication Service in the 413-457 Band, ET Docket No. 09-36***

One of this Commission's key goals is to remove unnecessary regulatory barriers to the development and deployment of products and services that have the potential of improving the lives of the people we serve. So often, when we make substantial strides in this direction, that action fails to receive the level of attention it deserves, because it seems difficult to construct a flashy headline, or hard to generate the type of controversy which would carry on into another news cycle. But in my opinion, this Order is one of the most important the Commission has adopted during my tenure, because the innovation it unleashes—medical micro power networks—has the potential to greatly improve the lives of those who are faced with some of today's most difficult medical challenges.

In 2009, the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation published a report estimating that 5.6 million Americans suffer from some form of paralysis. The medical micro power networks, which the Alfred Mann Foundation has developed, use implant devices to employ micro-stimulation techniques that can restore sensation, mobility, and other vital functions, to limbs and organs. This is an exciting innovation that could lead to incredible breakthroughs for the millions of Americans that suffer from paralysis and other debilitating neuromuscular injuries or disorders. As the Order explains, the beneficial impact of these micro-power networks could also reach beyond the medical field. Because of the growing demand for wireless spectrum, we must promote more efficient use of allocated spectrum, and as the Notice of Inquiry this Commission adopted last November makes clear, dynamic spectrum use technologies could greatly advance this policy goal. Because the micro power networks leverage advanced spectrum use technologies, such as spectrum sensing and dynamic frequency location, they are also providing another business case for use of dynamic spectrum technologies.

But this technological innovation did not come easy or cheap. The Alfred Mann Foundation has already spent approximately 115 million dollars and it has taken eleven years to develop this technology. I commend the ingenuity, effort, and sacrifice that were necessary to create these important medical treatment devices and services. And I wish to take another opportunity to applaud Julie Knapp, and the talented OET staff, for working through the technical issues in this proceeding.

This day also represents an opportunity to highlight the potential the relevant federal agencies have to ensure efficient approval of important technological innovations in the future. For example, the Alfred Mann Foundation had to receive the necessary federal regulatory approvals not only from the FCC, but also from the Veterans Administration, NTIA, and several agencies in the Department of Defense at a cost of millions of dollars in administrative expenses. Enhanced interagency collaboration has the potential to reduce the time and the economic resources it takes get such a valuable product on the market, and I am looking forward to being a part of an ever-improving collaborative engagement. That is why I was particularly pleased that last November, the FCC initiated a rulemaking proceeding, on the medical program experimental licenses, which seeks to promote ways that the FCC, and other relevant federal agencies, can help speed the development and deployment of wireless medical services to consumers. I encourage the industry to provide us with a clear record on how we can further improve in this area.

So this is a good news day, a significant news day for the FCC, as the Commission is taking an affirmative measure to reduce barriers to deploy new wireless medical services and improve the lives of millions.