

**REMARKS OF
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STATE EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY DIRECTORS ASSOCIATION
FEDERAL POLICY MAKER AWARDS CEREMONY
WASHINGTON, DC
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Thank you to the State Education Technology Directors Association. It is a treat to be with you here tonight—and a fantastic honor to receive the SETDA Federal Policymaker Award.

I know that in the past you have given this honor to some giants in technology and education policy, including Senator Olympia Snowe, Senator Patty Murray, and Representative George Miller. It is awesome to be in their company. But I am especially humbled knowing that you also bestowed this honor on Senator Jay Rockefeller.

You see, before coming to the Federal Communications Commission, I had the privilege of working with Senator Rockefeller. He is a dynamo—a dedicated public servant, deeply devoted to expanding opportunity in West Virginia and across the country. He is also one of the founding fathers of E-Rate—the nation’s largest education technology program.

So I came to the Commission well versed in E-Rate. I was schooled! But I also came knowing that good programs do not thrive without continuous attention and support—E-Rate, included.

E-Rate is the product of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Remember 1996? You and I probably called the Internet the “Information Superhighway.” The use of cell phones was rising, but a little technology company called Apple was sinking. It was a long time ago!

When E-Rate began, only 14 percent of public schools were connected to the Internet. Today that number is north of 95 percent. That sounds good. That sounds like success. But as everyone in this room is aware, the challenge is no longer connection—it is capacity. And on that score, we have work to do.

You know this. SETDA led the way with its report last year on “The Broadband Imperative: Recommendations to Address K-12 Infrastructure Needs.” You gave voice to the idea that in modern education, bandwidth matters.

More than that, you gave people like me the opportunity to pick up the charge. Your work gave me authority to spread the message that it was time for E-Rate 2.0. That it was time to reboot, reinvigorate, and recharge this program for the digital age.

Armed with your research, I spoke on E-Rate early and often. All across the country. In Alaska in Summer and Florida in Winter—and countless places in between. Then, lo and behold, this past July the Commission started a big rulemaking to update E-Rate. And in typical Commission style, we asked somewhere between a hundred and a million questions. No stone

goes unturned. But I hope as we move ahead we can keep focused on big questions—about increasing bandwidth, about reducing bureaucracy, and about funding.

So I hope you will continue to give us good ideas. Because we need to hear from educators and technology experts on the front lines in classrooms across the country. Because as President Obama put it in Mooresville, North Carolina, we are “at a moment when the rest of the world is trying to out-educate us[.]” But it is within our reach to make sure that students today have every tool they need to go as far as their talents and dreams and ambitions and hard work will take them.

I think we are at the start of something big. Something really audacious. Because we can seize the powerful combination of broadband, plummeting device costs, and increasing opportunity for cloud-based educational content. We can spur great things in digital age education. Call it ConnectED or call it E-Rate 2.0, but let’s just do it.

Thank you for this award and thank you for all that you do.