

**REMARKS OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL
CONSORTIUM FOR SCHOOL NETWORKING
AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC SERVICE
WASHINGTON, DC
MARCH 20, 2014**

Good evening. Thank you to the Consortium for School Networking for this award and for having us here tonight. Thank you also to the host committee: Senator Angus King, Senator Edward Markey, Former Secretary of Education Richard Riley, Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, and Former Governor Bob Wise of the Alliance for Excellence in Education. One more thank you—to Senator Jay Rockefeller and Senator Olympia Snowe, two giants in education and technology policy who I had the privilege to work with when I worked on Capitol Hill. So getting this honor tonight—which you bestowed upon them in years past—is really something.

About a year ago I came to your community and said I have an idea. I said we need to reboot and reinvigorate E-Rate. Well, what a difference a year makes.

Here's something I've learned. It's good to have friends in Washington—but it's better to have an army. And over the last year you and thousands of others who are deeply invested in our schools, our students, and the future of education have marched together and put E-Rate reform right at the top of the agenda in Washington. We have a proceeding at the Federal Communications Commission designed to look at this program from top to bottom. We have reform ideas before us from stakeholders of every stripe. And we have an Administration geared up and in sync with its ConnectED initiative.

But it's really no wonder. Because from the very beginning the people here in this room understood how technology is remaking this world and how it holds revolutionary possibilities for education. So many of you were here when E-Rate got its start in the heady days after passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Remember 1996? That's when cell phone use was just starting to grow, but a little company called Apple was sinking. It was a long time ago.

Eighteen years later a lot has changed. We have connected nearly all of our schools. But connection to schools is no longer enough. We need speed. We need broadband—not just to the school door, but to the classroom.

Beyond speed, we need simplicity. The bureaucracy of the E-Rate program has become too much for too many of our schools to bear. So we need to make it easier for beneficiaries to participate in this program.

Finally, we need to spend E-Rate dollars smart. We need to phase out old services and make room for more high-speed broadband. We need to restore what inflation has taken away from this program. Then we need spend what it takes to connect all our students—no matter where they go to school.

So I've boiled reform down to these three essentials—speed, simplicity, and spending smart. But there is one last thing that is essential—making sure it works for the teachers and school officials on the front lines in classrooms every day. If our reforms do not work for them, they should not work for us in Washington either.

So help us soldier on and finish what we've started. Because this is big. 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 E-Rate 2.0, but let's just do it.

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