

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Petition of USTelecom for Forbearance Pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 160(c) to Accelerate Investment in Broadband and Next-Generation Networks*, WC Docket No. 18-141; *2000 Biennial Review Separate Affiliate Requirements of Section 64.1903 of the Commission's Rules*, CC Docket No. 00-175.

Today's order eliminates regulations that were part of the process of opening up long-distance service markets to competition two decades ago. The regulations we consider today served an important purpose in that context. But – times have changed. The copper lines of the legacy telephone network are no longer the only service option. The regulations today's order addresses were adopted before widespread use of cell phones, before cable companies provided voice service over cable, and before all-inclusive, all distance voice service plans were the norm.

Even though times and the communications marketplace have changed, we still have to take a careful look as we consider eliminating regulations, and be mindful that we don't take actions that undercut competition. The Communications Act defines the analysis we must consider in a forbearance petition.<sup>1</sup> Consistent with that required forbearance analysis, I also apply the framework I previously announced that when the Commission is considering proposals to eliminate a regulation, I will also look to see whether, in my judgment, we are still meeting the broader statutory obligations and key missions underlying the regulation.<sup>2</sup>

In this case, granting the forbearance requests addressed in today's order makes sense to me. Critical statutory protections are preserved. But, I am aware that there is more to come with the forbearance petition today's order addresses. More controversial aspects of US Telecom's forbearance petition remain pending, are not addressed in this order, and must be addressed this summer. I will be looking closely to ensure that the Commission meets its statutory obligations and key missions as it evaluates the forbearance criteria and addresses the remaining requests.

I know that the analysis required for an order like this one is rigorous, and I thank the staff of the Wireline Competition Bureau for your hard work in preparing this Order.

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<sup>1</sup> See 47 U.S.C. § 160 (c).

<sup>2</sup> *Elimination of Obligation to File Broadcast Mid-Term Report (Form 397) Under Section 73.2080(F)(2)*, Report and Order, 2019, WL 696578, (Feb. 15, 2019) (concurring Statement of Commissioner Starks).