

**SEPARATE STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN MICHAEL K. POWELL**

Re: Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service

I am pleased that today the Commission addresses the list of supported services that our universal service mechanism supports. We could not have reached this decision without input from the Federal – State Joint Board on Universal Service. The Joint Board’s recommendation greatly informed today’s decision and I wish to thank each member of that body for their contributions.

Perhaps one of the more contentious questions on which the Joint Board sought comment is whether the Commission should alter the manner in which competitive eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) receive universal service support. In connection with this question, some have proposed that ETCs provide equal access to providers of long distance services as a condition of receiving support. I have grave doubts about imposing such a requirement and believe that doing so may well run afoul of the statutory scheme. Reflexively imposing equal access on wireless carriers fails to appreciate the distinct market and competitive conditions of CMRS providers. I greatly appreciate the support of my colleagues in reaching today’s decision to consider this issue as part of the *Portability Proceeding* pending before the Joint Board and the Commission. That rulemaking will examine the process for designating ETCs and rules relating to the funding of ETCs in rural areas. I look forward to further consideration of the impact of these rules - particularly as they relate to wireless carriers - in that proceeding. We should complete it expeditiously.