

## STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL K. POWELL

Re: *Extending Wireless Telecommunications Services to Tribal Lands; WT Docket No. 99-266*

Our government-to-government relationship with tribal authorities make us partners in the quest to bring access to all modern communications to Indian Country. We share a common goal: to increase the availability of telecommunications services on tribal lands. While penetration rates have increased in the last decade, the chasm between penetration rates on tribal lands and the national average must be closed. Current penetration rates – which are below 50% of the population in some tribal areas – are unacceptable. Spectrum-based services provide an ideal opportunity to close this gap.

The order we adopt today takes common sense steps to increase the availability of wireless services on underserved tribal lands. By refining the bidding credit program adopted previously – including by extending the certification period to allow ample time for tribal consultation – we make the program more “user-friendly,” increasing the probability that the credits will be used and service will be delivered. We also seek comment on ways to make the bidding credit program more attractive and to create incentives for wireless deployment in areas adjacent to tribal lands, which often suffer from the same low penetration rates as tribal lands themselves. We must work together to utilize our resources in new and creative ways to tackle these challenges. To that end, I note the productive government-to-government meetings and discussions we held recently with tribal leaders and representatives from the National Congress of American Indians and our stepped up outreach and consultation with tribes on issues of significant importance, such as historic preservation. I am committed to continuing this positive direction and building the solid relationship that will yield the results we all seek.

I applaud the leadership and imagination of Commissioners Copps and Adelstein in developing some of the proposals in the further notice. I look forward to working with them and my other colleagues to ensure that all Americans enjoy technology-neutral access to modern telecommunications services and can participate fully in the digital economy.