

**Statement of
Commissioner Michael J. Copps,
Approving in Part, Concurring in Part**

Re: Application by Verizon Maryland Inc., Verizon Washington, D.C. Inc., Verizon West Virginia, Inc., Bell Atlantic Communications, Inc. (d/b/a Verizon Enterprise Solutions), Verizon Global Networks, Inc., and Verizon Select Services Inc., for Authorization to Provide In-Region InterLATA Services in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and West Virginia

With today's grant of its application to provide long-distance services in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and West Virginia, Verizon has now obtained long-distance authorization for all of its States and Washington, D.C. I commend Verizon for this achievement and the State and D.C. Commissions in that region for their significant efforts to promote competition.

I concur in part rather than approve this decision for the same reasons laid out in my statements to the Orders granting Verizon's applications for New Hampshire, Delaware, and Virginia. As in those Orders, the majority concludes that the statute permits Bell companies in all instances to demonstrate compliance with the checklist by aggregating the rates for non-loop elements. I disagree with the majority's analysis. I believe the better reading of the statute is that the rate for each network element must comport with Congress' pricing directive. We are faced with an analogous situation here.

Now that Verizon has the authority to provide long-distance services nationwide, the real challenge begins. The Commission looks closely at a Bell company's performance to ensure compliance with the statute at the time we consider a Section 271 application. We do not, however, always accord the same vigilance towards ensuring continued compliance. We must institute better follow-up on what happens following a successful application. Competition is not the result of some frantic one-time dash to check-list approval. It is a process over time. It is about -- or should be about -- creating and then sustaining the reality of competition. Our present data on whether competition is taking hold is sketchy and non-integrated. We need better data to evaluate whether and how approved carriers are complying with their obligations after grant of the application, as Congress required.

In this effort, we must work closely with the State Commissions. Our expectation is that Verizon will work cooperatively with other carriers to resolve any issues that develop. To the extent that Verizon does not adequately address problems that occur, the Commission and the State Commissions have a shared obligation to enforce swiftly and effectively the market-opening obligations of the Act. Now that we will no longer examine Verizon's performance as part of a Section 271 application, we must be especially proactive and vigilant as we monitor and enforce all facets of Section 271 compliance. By taking this responsibility seriously, we can ensure that consumers continue to reap the benefits of enduring competition as envisioned by Congress in the 1996 Act -- greater choice, lower prices, and better services.