



Statement of Commissioner Kevin J. Martin



Encouraging the deployment of broadband services to all Americans has been my top priority during my tenure at the Commission. Broadband services are essential to the economy of the 21st century, dramatically reducing the costs of exchanging information and enabling local businesses to connect to world markets. Access to broadband services is especially important to rural America, providing business, educational and healthcare opportunities to remote parts of the country.

Since the issuance of our last 706 report, the Commission has taken some key steps to promote broadband deployment. For example, we removed unbundling requirements on newly deployed fiber-to-the-home, where there is competition from cable, which makes it easier for telephone companies to deploy infrastructure to provide the broadband and video services of the 21st century. The Commission also provided regulatory relief for new hybrid fiber-copper facilities, deregulating the fiber and new packet-based technologies that provide broadband services today. In addition, the Commission adjusted the TELRIC or “wholesale” prices for all new investment in equipment. Companies seeking to push fiber further to the home and deploy new infrastructure will now have the opportunity.

I agree with the Commission’s conclusion that “advanced telecommunications capability” is currently being deployed on a “reasonable and timely basis.” The availability of that capability is increasing, and I am pleased that subscribers to services the Commission characterizes as “high-speed” were reported in 93 percent of all zip codes in the United States. While more

consumers are now able to enjoy the speed and applications that a true broadband connection offers, the Commission should continue its efforts to eliminate barriers to infrastructure investment and to accelerate broadband deployment.

I am particularly pleased with the progress of deployment of “high-speed” services to rural and other underserved areas.¹ Two years ago, our data showed that fewer than 40 percent of the most sparsely populated zip codes had at least one subscriber to “high-speed” services while more than 90 percent of the most densely populated zip codes had a least one such subscriber. Today, over 70 percent of the sparsely populated zip codes have a subscriber with “high-speed service.” While I am pleased by the rapid progress made to narrow this deployment gap, there is a need for continued efforts to ensure comparable access for consumers in rural America.

I am also pleased that today’s report recognizes that the 200 kbps standard is a “first-generation” definition of broadband and that future section 706 reports will collect data and report on next-generation as well as first-generation broadband. This proposal should enable the Commission to better monitor the migration to next-generation networks and services and provide us with a better understanding of the deployment of advanced services in the marketplace.

Finally, we should move forward on several pending proceedings to help spur continued broadband deployment. Regulatory uncertainty and delay function as entry barriers, limiting investment and impeding deployment of new services. While there is much more to be accomplished, I look forward to working on these issues and hope to ensure that advanced telecommunications capability continues to be deployed on a reasonable and timely basis.

¹ See Statement of Commissioner Kevin J. Martin, *Inquiry Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability to All Americans in a Reasonable and Timely Fashion and Possible Steps to Accelerate Such Deployment Pursuant to Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996*, CC Docket No. 98-146, Report, 17 FCC Rd 2844 (2002).