

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN**

Re: 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, Fourth Notice of Inquiry

I am pleased to support this Notice opening an inquiry into the status of broadband deployment. Congress directed this Commission to ensure that all Americans have reasonable and timely access to advanced telecommunications capability, such as broadband services, and this effort is of critical importance to the health of our economy and our quality of life.

Given the universally acknowledged significance of broadband services, I wish that we had started this inquiry sooner. Section 706 directs this Commission to conduct regular inquiries concerning the availability of broadband services. It's been over two years since we completed our last inquiry and the market for broadband service is evolving rapidly and dynamically. Parties may differ about the need for and shape of a national broadband policy, but given the global economy, we must face up to what is happening in the real world.

While we have delayed our own report card, there are warning signs being raised from other sources. The U.S. was recently ranked 11th worldwide in broadband penetration in a report by the International Telecommunications Union. I am glad that this Notice explores what lessons we can learn from those nations that may be deploying broadband more quickly.

This Notice also asks fundamental questions about broadband deployment to consumers in rural areas, persons with disabilities, and Native Americans. The record we develop in this proceeding should improve our understanding of the challenges of providing broadband to these consumers, and on the unique opportunities that broadband services can bring.

As the first person from South Dakota to serve as a Commissioner at the FCC, I know firsthand how important broadband services are to rural communities. Ensuring access to hard-to-serve areas of America is vital to their economic viability. Broadband gives businesses in these areas the tools they need to compete across the globe. By giving rural consumers access to telemedicine and distance learning, not to mention the vast array and ever growing resources available through the Internet, we give rural residents and their children the same opportunities that others enjoy. There are many success stories in providing broadband to these consumers, and I encourage commenters to help us understand the secrets to their success.

I am also pleased that this item asks questions about our definition of "advanced telecommunications capability." In past reports, we have considered services that deliver

transmission speeds of at 200 kbps as broadband, a definition we adopted in 1999. Five years later, it appears that many of the most promising applications require considerably greater capacity. It is important that we look closely at the capabilities that are currently available to consumers. We also acknowledge in this Notice our intention to revise our formal broadband data gathering program, but concede that we have not started this effort in time for us to use any more comprehensive data collected for this report. In the past, the Commission has acknowledged limitations to its data collection effort, and I wish that we had addressed those issues in time for us to benefit from more granular and detailed data.

Finally, I believe that federal policies, such as universal service or video relay service, can play a vital role by increasing access to and encouraging demand for broadband services. Many of these programs are at issue in other proceedings before this Commission, so I encourage commenters to discuss the role of these programs in promoting the availability and use of broadband.