

**SEPARATE STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

*Re: Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, CC Docket No. 96-45 (FCC 05-46).*

Today the Commission largely adopts the ETC designation recommendations of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service. In doing so, we provide a more rigorous template for review of ETC applications. This is long overdue, and I am pleased to support it. I especially am encouraged by the build-out plans, reporting requirements and annual certifications we require in this decision. Collectively, these will provide this Commission and our state counterparts with a way to monitor and ensure that ETC funding truly is being used to preserve and advance universal service.

As promising as this development is, much more work needs to be done to secure the long-term sustainability of universal service. As ETC designations grow, new challenges will arise. In particular, the Commission will need to face the consequences of multiple designations in high-cost areas on the overall size of the fund. In addition, key questions are teed-up in the current Joint Board referral concerning the high-cost support mechanism and the level of support made available to multiple ETCs. While we don't resolve these issues here, they are an important part of the larger picture. I am hopeful that today's decision is only the foundation for this broader discussion and that in the near future we will build on the efforts to increase accountability that we adopt here.