

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

Re: Continental Airlines Petition for Declaratory Ruling Regarding the Over-the-Air Reception Devices (OTARD) Rules, *Memorandum Opinion & Order*.

Today's declaratory ruling reaffirms the Commission's dedication to promoting the widespread deployment of unlicensed Wi-Fi devices. It clarifies that American consumers and businesses are free to install Wi-Fi antennas under our OTARD rules – meaning without seeking approval from their landlords – just as they are free to install antennas for video programming and other fixed wireless applications.

Wi-Fi is one of the Commission's greatest wireless success stories. The genius of this unlicensed technology is that no central authority controls or manages how and where these networks spring up. Instead, any private or commercial operator who sees a need for a local Wi-Fi network may build and operate one. The price that Wi-Fi users pay for this freedom is that they, like all Part 15 users, must accept interference from other devices in the unlicensed bands. But the nation's half-decade of experience with this new technology has made it quite plain that this trade-off is more than worth it. When it comes to providing broadband over the unlicensed bands, the airwaves are truly the *people's airwaves*. So while I certainly support strong licensing regulation in some contexts, I think it is equally important that we leave other portions of the spectrum open to unlicensed uses.

Today's decision ensures that the Wi-Fi bands remain free and open to travelers, who can make productive use of their time while waiting to catch their next flight in an airport. They will be able to choose from among multiple providers, including members-only airport lounges as well as coffee shops or businesses that may choose to attract customers by offering Wi-Fi service at lower prices than the airport authority offers.

I do want to note that I approve of today's decision only because the record is clear – in fact, uncontested – that allowing multiple Wi-Fi operators in the airport will cause no interference to the safety-of-life communications that the airport authority conducts on its dedicated, separate, and licensed public safety channels. In the unlikely event that technical developments change this balance, I would of course support swift and forceful remedial action from this Commission.