

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN**

Re: Establishment of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau and Other Organizational Changes

I am very pleased to support the creation of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau. As recent events have shown, the role of communications is so important during emergencies, whether citizens are trying to find out what is happening with their families or emergency personnel are responding to an urgent situation. It is critical that the Commission provide the best leadership possible to ensure that communications are fully operational during these most serious events. Indeed, this is one of our core directives under the Communications Act of 1934.

We all have been moved by the devastation caused by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. Our nation's communications systems were truly put to the test, with unfortunately very mixed results. Enormous coordination was needed and performed under often chaotic circumstances, and we saw how communications workers give so much of themselves to restore the networks on which we all rely. The Commission also received high marks for ensuring that it was as responsive as possible in the wake of these tragedies. Our staff worked extremely quickly and over long hours to respond in countless ways to help restore service. The Commission truly plays such an important role during these times of crisis.

I have been a strong supporter of the response efforts of the Chairman and his staff during these events last year, and of his commitment to reorganize and refocus the Commission so that we can even better address public safety, homeland security, and disaster preparedness issues going forward. This is an issue that my colleague, Commissioner Copps, also has long championed, so I am pleased to implement this proposal with my fellow colleagues today.

Just as we have called on industry to assess what went wrong and what went right with their emergency response plans, the Commission must do the same. Of course, we have a Blue Ribbon Panel helping us evaluate the lessons of last year. By creating a Bureau uniquely focused on these critical issues, I am hopeful that we can also better assess what worked well and what went wrong, but just as importantly, to figure out how we can improve our preparedness and response in the future. For example, we must continue to address important issues affecting the dissemination of multilingual emergency information and to explore how best to integrate new technologies into our current Emergency Alert System.

Of course, we must keep our eye on the Bureau's mission – we must avoid letting the distraction of reorganization affect our disaster preparedness. We cannot afford to let our guard down for just one minute. We want to improve our internal systems and procedures to achieve an even higher standard of emergency preparedness, and not get bogged down in the administrative challenges of restructuring. Knowing the professional commitment of our staff, I am more than optimistic that our agency will not fall prey to the bureaucratic distractions that have plagued the ability of other agencies to respond in a timely and effective manner.

Even as we elevate our public safety and emergency response functions, we must be mindful of our other core Commission functions. One area where this will be particularly important is with respect to the decision to separate out the licensing of spectrum for public safety services from other wireless services and move these licensing functions to the new Bureau. Spectrum bands designated for land mobile radio services typically cover business, industrial, public safety, and sometimes even commercial services. Indeed spectrum can sometimes be shared between these different services through our inter-category sharing rules. And applications for all wireless services – private, commercial, and public safety – are handled through the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau's Universal Licensing System.

So we must make sure that, in separating out public safety licensing, we do not inadvertently undercut our ability to effectuate spectrum policy, whether unique to public safety or on a more industry-wide basis. As we tackle important public safety licensing issues in the future, like the ongoing restructuring of the 800 MHz band, it is critical that we continue to work across Bureaus to ensure that these important spectrum initiatives are handled in a comprehensive and thoughtful manner.