

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER DEBORAH TAYLOR TATE**

Re: Establishment of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau

We could never have imagined the horrible tragedies that our country and thousands of individuals have faced over the past few years from the terrorist attacks on 9/11 to the more recent catastrophic natural disasters along the Gulf Coast. Last week, hearing personal accounts in Mississippi at the second meeting of the FCC Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Communications Networks made such an impact on me. While certainly we cannot ensure these events will never occur; we must be more and better prepared to deal with the aftermath. In addition, not only must we be prepared for the events that have already occurred, but also the possibility of a pandemic or other health-related attacks. The one clear message we heard was the need for better communications. Therefore, I am pleased to support our pledge to improve our own efforts to streamline communications and functions here at the Federal Communications Commission.

On September 29, 2005, Chairman Martin appeared before the House Commerce and Energy Committee's Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet to announce his intention for the Commission to take three important steps: 1) to make more than \$200 million of relief available; 2) to establish an independent expert panel charged with reviewing the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the communications infrastructure in the affected areas and making recommendations to improve disaster preparedness, network reliability, and communication among first responders; and 3) to create a new FCC bureau to better coordinate the agency's planning and response efforts to disaster.

Today, we "make good" on the third and final promise of those plans, and perhaps the most wide-reaching initiative -- to create a new FCC bureau to implement this coordination. The creation of this new bureau will ensure that the FCC, which, in my opinion, went above and beyond the call of duty in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, is better prepared not only to respond to future disasters, but also to undertake, in a more coordinated fashion, assessment and planning initiatives to prevent loss of life and destruction of property no matter the disaster.

There is still much work to be done. As I visited with "Hands", a nonprofit organization that is still distributing much needed clothing, food, household appliances, and other necessities to the Gulf Coast, I was struck by how very much work there still is to be done -- work to restore not only services, but to rebuild homes and businesses, and to restore hope.

As we learned from these horrifying events, ours is a national community in a global economy. The security of our country depends on the strength of our commitment to protect all Americans. Our action today makes clear our commitment and underscores the concept that the dissemination of vital information and interoperable communications at every level are our first line of defense against threatening elements, whether natural or foreign.