

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

Re: *Request for Review of the Decision of the Universal Service Administrator by Bishop Perry Middle School New Orleans, LA, et al.; Schools and Libraries Universal Support Service, Order (File Nos. SLD-487170, et al., CC Docket No. 02-6)*

E-Rate plays a decisive role in providing schools and libraries with the communications tools they need for our children and communities to compete and prosper in this digital age. Because access to E-Rate is so important, we need to be dead serious about rooting out abuses and punishing those few bad actors who would exploit the program. But that is not the case in the select appeals before the Commission today. Clearly, these cases are not about waste, fraud or abuse. These are about limited, and I believe, relatively minor ministerial errors. When a school inadvertently provides the right information on a slightly dated but virtually identical form, when technical problems prevent an applicant from interfacing with USAC's electronic filing system and when a third-party carrier prevents an application from arriving in a timely manner, flat-out funding denial is a harsh consequence. It can be especially harsh when, as was the case in one application here, a minor clerical error led to a denial of E-Rate funding for an entire state. In fact, it becomes hard to square denial for slight clerical errors like these with our duties under the statute to further the deployment of advanced services. For these reasons, I support today's decision.