

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN**

Re: *Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina on Communications Networks; Notice of Proposed Rulemaking; EB Docket No. 06-119*

I want to extend my deepest thanks to the members of the Independent Panel Reviewing the Impact of Hurricane Katrina for investing so much of their time and effort to draw out lessons from this disaster and to better prepare our communities for the future. The release of their Report brings back memories of the devastation wrought by the storm and its aftermath, and of the heroic and continuing efforts of those communities to regroup and rebuild.

Shortly after the storm, I had an opportunity to witness first hand some of the widespread destruction and personal loss in the Gulf Coast, which was far worse than I could have ever imagined. More importantly, I also was able to meet and talk with communications workers, who labored around the clock to restore connectivity to the Gulf Coast, often at great personal sacrifice. It was humbling to see Americans act so selflessly when others are in need, particularly when so many were themselves suffering the loss of homes, communities, or loved ones. To all of these citizens, we owe an honest assessment of our strengths, weaknesses, and our commitment to preparedness.

Our experience with Hurricane Katrina demonstrates that the role of communications is essential during emergencies, whether citizens are trying to find out what is happening with their families, or emergency personnel are responding to an urgent situation. This Report confirms that our nation's communications systems were put to the test, with unfortunately mixed results. I welcome the coming public dialogue on the Independent Panel's recommendations, and look forward to working with my colleagues and the broader community to improve our preparedness and response.

This Report also highlights how critical it is that the Commission provides the best leadership possible to ensure that communications are fully operational during the most serious events. It can play a key role in improving our nation's disaster preparedness, network reliability, and communications among first responders. As the Report suggests, the Commission must also take the lead in coordinating with state and local governments in advance of future disasters and in working with other federal agencies to ensure that credentialing procedures and other requirements are developed in advance to ensure access by communications workers to affected areas post-disaster.

At the same time, this Report highlights the importance of advance planning and provides important recommendations on how we can ready ourselves before disaster strikes. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Commission received high marks for ensuring that it was responsive in the wake of these tragedies. But with the first tropical storm of 2006 already hitting the Gulf Coast, we must move more quickly to better position ourselves for the inevitable next challenges. So I wholeheartedly support the simultaneous release of our NPRM to better allow us to move promptly forward on the important Panel recommendations.

Finally, I want to thank Chairman Martin for convening this group and Nancy Victory for stepping forward in leading the panel. A disaster like this demonstrates how important it is that we all work together in times of crisis. Efforts like this are essential to achieve the continual improvement necessary to protect ourselves in the event of future disasters, be they natural or man-made. Thank you again for all of your effort and for your commitment to the hard work ahead.