

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

Re: *In the Matter of Inter-Tel Technologies, Inc.*, File No. EB-05-IH-0012

The E-Rate program continues to provide the essential digital tools our children need for success in the Digital Age by connecting our schools and libraries to the Internet. Indeed, E-Rate is a lifeline for the hardest to reach and poorest children who are eager to learn and at risk of being left behind as technology moves forward. Like any great program, E-Rate cannot meet its full potential without regular review and care. And in this regard, there are many who deserve credit for their vigilance in rooting out waste, fraud and abuse from the program. The FCC, Department of Justice and E-Rate's Schools and Libraries Division have all stepped up to the plate to provide greater oversight of the program to ensure that limited resources find their rightful homes and are used most effectively.

The conviction of Inter-Tel Technologies, Inc. and today's debarment is further evidence of these efforts. Inter-Tel's activities were designed to bilk the E-Rate program of millions of dollars and it is certainly this type of case the FCC had in mind when three years ago it enacted its debarment requirements. I therefore concur in the decision to debar Inter-Tel from the E-Rate program for the period of one year. However, as I said when the Commission enacted the debarment rules, "we need to be dead serious about rooting out abuses." In point of fact, activities like those engaged in by Inter-Tel typically merit a lengthier debarment period. The Commission missed an opportunity here to send a sterner message to other corporations and individuals contemplating similar wrongdoings that such activities will not be tolerated by this Agency.