

STATEMENT
COMMISSIONER ROBERT M. McDOWELL

Re: In the Matter of Rural Health Care Support Mechanism, WC Docket No. 02-60

The response to our call for applications to participate in the Rural Health Care Pilot Program in September 2006 was heartening. The applications demonstrated the need for enhanced access to the most current and advanced health care information and services in rural areas throughout the nation. I am pleased that we are granting 69 of the applications. Our action will speed the development of regional, state and national broadband networks dedicated to health care. We are carrying out the Congressional mandate that the Commission improve the availability of advanced telecommunications and information services for rural health care providers. This program also increases support for rural areas in time of public health emergencies, such as pandemics and bioterrorism attacks. At the same time, we are imposing safeguards to assure that the rural health care funds are used for their intended purposes. I look forward to seeing increased telemedicine and telehealth services in rural areas as a result of our action today.