

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

Re: *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service; TracFone Wireless, Inc.; Petitions for Designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier in the States of New York, Florida, Virginia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Alabama, North Carolina, Tennessee, Delaware, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and the District of Columbia for the Limited Purpose of Offering Lifeline Service to Qualified Households, CC Docket No. 96-45, Order.*

For quite some time the public debate has centered on whether and how the Universal Service system's high-cost fund should support wireless CETCs. While an important policy discussion for sure, sometimes we lose sight of the fact that there is an entire segment of consumers who would lack a phone at all and would easily become disconnected from society were it not for the support of the Lifeline program. I am very pleased that today the Commission takes a moment to focus on making it easier for low-income consumers to receive wireless phone service. The Petitioner is now eligible for Lifeline support to provide wireless phone service in ten states and the District of Columbia. To some who own multiple phones of every size and shape, such a decision may seem inconsequential; but to the many working poor in this country phone service remains essential to staying connected with family, employers, and the communities in which they live. A wireless option will only make it easier for these consumers to stay connected. The Order recognizes both the importance of providing consumers with a wireless option and at the same time ensures that consumers have essential emergency services available to them. For these reasons, I am pleased to approve this item.