

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

*Re: Comprehensive Review of Universal Service Fund Management, Administration, and Oversight, WC Docket No. 05-195.*

The Universal Service system is an essential part of this country's commitment to ensuring that all Americans have access to basic phone service and advanced telecommunications. The successes of the program can be found in rural areas, in schools and libraries, in our rural health care system, and in the poorest communities. In all these places, the Universal Service Fund is making a real difference in bringing the essential tools of the Digital Age to communities that would not otherwise have access to telephone and broadband services. Like any great program, however, the Universal Service system cannot meet its full potential without regular review and care. For this reason, I have long believed that substantial and on-going auditing and oversight of the Fund will do much to ensure its sustainability.

The Commission has taken some significant steps towards protecting the integrity of the Fund and today's Order identifies many of the Commission's worthwhile efforts. However, we must recognize that there is always more that can be done. The Government Accountability Office, Members of Congress, and many others have pointed to the need for improvement in the oversight of the Fund. Accordingly, this Notice of Inquiry is quite timely, if not overdue, in asking for comments on new methods for safeguarding the Fund. Only with the Commission's vigilance and scrutiny, along with the responsible use of monies by USF recipients, will the Fund be able to continue its successes in the future. I therefore support this Notice of Inquiry and urge that the public record quickly form the basis for any additional safeguards that are needed to protect the Fund and its underlying mission.