

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER DEBORAH TAYLOR TATE**

- Re: *High-Cost Universal Service Support; Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, WC Docket No. 05-337; CC Docket No. 96-45, FCC 08-22 (*Joint Board Comprehensive High Cost Recommended Decision Notice*) (Approving).
- Re: *High-Cost Universal Service Support; Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, WC Docket No. 05-337; CC Docket No. 96-45, FCC 08-4 (*Identical Support Rule Notice*) (Approving).
- Re: *High-Cost Universal Service Support; Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, WC Docket No. 05-337; CC Docket No. 96-45, FCC 08-5 (*Reverse Auctions Notice*) (Approving).

As Federal Chair of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service (Joint Board) I am particularly pleased that we are taking this significant step forward in the journey toward comprehensive reform of the high-cost universal service program. This is an important program at the heart of rural America. Its purpose, to connect all Americans to telecommunications at affordable rates, has over the years permitted people to be connected even in rural and remote parts of our nation. Going forward, the Universal Service Fund will continue to play a critical and increasing role in one of our top priorities at the Commission – encouraging broadband deployment to all corners of America.

Specifically, we seek comment on the recommendation of the Joint Board regarding comprehensive reform of high-cost universal service support. It is also significant that we also incorporate by reference the *Identical Support NPRM* and *Reverse Auctions NPRM*, including the records to be developed in response to those NPRMs. I look forward to receiving public input and examining these issues.

I would like to thank my Co-Chair, Commissioner Ray Baum of the Oregon Public Utility Commission. I am especially pleased that all eight Joint Board members, large and small/rural and urban/donor and recipient, were able to come to this consensus and hope this will move us forward and provide the basic building blocks for fundamental reform to ensure Fund stability and viability in a fiscally responsible manner. All of the Joint Board members deserve praise for their commitment to the in-depth analysis of these complex issues, their desire to positively affect public policy and to make decisions in the public interest in a thoughtful and deliberative manner. They should all be commended for their commitment to serve on the Joint Board in addition to their full time positions as government officials.