

**STATEMENT OF
ACTING CHAIRMAN MICHAEL J. COPPS**

Re: High-Cost Universal Service Support; Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service, WC Docket No. 05-337, CC Docket No. 96-45.

Universal Service policy is built on the principle that all of us benefit when more of us are connected. The principle resides at the core of the Telecommunications Act. And Congress made clear that the Commission must be working to ensure that all Americans—rural, urban and everything in between—have access to reasonably comparable services at reasonably comparable rates. Clearly, at this time, for the future of our country, it is crucial that we strive to preserve and advance Universal Service policy.

Today, we are taking a firm step on a deliberate timeline for considering the High Cost Universal Service mechanism for non-rural providers. Comments elicited from the Notice of Inquiry will refresh the record and bring the matter of non-rural High Cost Universal Service support up-to-date. The Commission will conclude with a final order by the middle of April 2010. By that time, we will have had the benefit of completing the National Broadband Plan, which will further inform us when it comes to advancing universal service. I look forward to reviewing the comments and completing this matter once and for all. Today's action puts us on the road to achieve this.