

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MEREDITH A. BAKER  
APPROVING IN PART, CONCURRING IN PART**

Re: *Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism*, CC Docket No. 02-6; *A National Broadband Plan for Our Future*, GN Docket No. 09-51

I have long supported E-rate and I am pleased to support the initiatives the Commission adopts here today. In the twelve years E-rate has been in place, the program has been instrumental in expanding access to the Internet in our communities across the country through their schools and libraries. The National Broadband Plan found that 97 percent of public schools, and 94 percent of instructional rooms within those schools, now have Internet access. By any measure, that is success and the E-rate program has been critical to that achievement. But more must be done to build on that success in a world in which kids learn through their computers; teachers and parents engage in the learning process through Internet communications; and all generations increasingly depend on their mobile devices. I think this Order takes a number of important steps to modernize E-rate with a responsible approach for the broadband era.

I concur in one aspect of this Order: indexing the annual funding cap. As I have said many times, I continue to have concerns that our efforts to modernize the various components of the Universal Service Fund (USF) should not result in further growth in the overall size of the Fund. While I recognize that any increase in E-rate support is offset with funds reclaimed through our action in another proceeding, I believe it may have been more prudent to delay consideration of increasing the funding cap for E-rate until we are farther down the road of comprehensive reform for all components of the Universal Service Fund, including the high-cost support mechanism. Only then will we be sure that reforms for all USF programs together—some of which continue to grow—can be accomplished without increasing the overall size of the Fund, while achieving Congress's goal of ensuring broadband access by all people of the United States. Finally, I feel strongly that the Commission must remain vigilant with regard to any signs of waste, fraud or abuse of this program. It is our obligation to ensure that money is spent responsibly to achieve the goals set out by Congress.

E-rate is a success story of which this Commission can be proud. By moving forward with common-sense reforms, the program will only get stronger and be the foundation for even more impressive results for our communities in the future. I appreciate the willingness of the Chairman and my fellow commissioners to work together to make this a strong order that addresses all concerns and I would like to thank the staff for their hard work on this item.