

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

Re: *Policies to Promote Rural Radio Service and to Streamline Allotment and Assignment Procedures*, MB Docket 09-52

I am delighted to add my vote of approval to this *Order* that sets us on a path to foster increased ownership of radio broadcast stations by federally recognized American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages. I was pleased the Commission launched this proceeding during my Acting Chairmanship, and I couldn't be more pleased with the prompt action taken by the Commission to implement this priority for Tribes and tribal consortia. The *Order* starts from our assessment that the current allocation priorities – which are designed to provide a fair, efficient and equitable distribution of radio service among all States and communities – have not worked as intended for tribal lands. Only 41 radio stations out of the approximately 14,000 radio stations licensed in the United States – or less than one-third of one percent – are currently licensed to federally recognized Indian tribes. This sad statistic testifies to a course much in need of correcting. Thus, we adopt today a new Section 307 (b) priority that will apply to federally recognized Native American Tribes that propose new radio services to serve tribal lands.

Increased tribal ownership of radio stations furthers the Commission's core goals of competition, localism and diversity. More tribally-owned stations will mean new opportunities for these rural communities: economic advancement from construction activity to erect broadcast facilities; advertisements for goods and services geared especially to tribal audiences and markets; career and employment opportunities in media-related fields; outlets for the distribution of diverse cultural programming and viewpoints, as well as public safety information for tribal lands. This initiative goes to the heart of localism. There can be no doubt that radio stations owned by Tribes, for the benefit of those residing on tribal lands, advance the FCC's localism objective.

In addition, we seek further comment on whether the Commission should implement a special bidding credit to tribal applicants in addition to or in lieu of our existing new entrant bidding credits, and how Tribes without tribal lands can qualify for the Tribal priority we adopt today. The *Order* also adopts additional measures to streamline auction application processing, including a procedure to cap the number of applications a single applicant may file in an AM short-form window. These much needed reforms will protect the integrity of the auctions process and promote opportunities for new entrants to bid for radio broadcast construction permits.

I fully support today's *Order*, and look forward to continuing to work on ways to enhance broadcast ownership diversity among American Indian Tribes.