

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI**

Re: Schools and Libraries Universal Service Support Mechanism, CC Docket No. 02-6

Especially in these times of economic crisis, having broad community access to broadband is essential. We know that broadband availability and adoption are lagging, especially in rural, minority, low-income, and Tribal communities.

Today, we enable schools receiving E-Rate funding to open up their Internet facilities to their communities. Schools will now have the option to permit the general public to use their Internet connections whenever school is not in session. These connections will be available to adults taking evening digital literacy courses, to unemployed workers looking for jobs posted online, to citizens using e-government services, and for other uses that local schools believe will help their communities.

By making broadband available to more members of the public, this waiver furthers the goals of universal service and the Congressional directive to encourage access to advanced telecommunications and information services. And it does so in a way that doesn't increase the size of the Universal Service Fund—indeed, that encourages more efficient use of USF funds.

The idea to adopt this positive reform of E-Rate came out of our broadband process—staff from our Wireline Bureau and broadband team saw a clear and fast opportunity to expand broadband access. We made the decision to move forward, rather than waiting for the Broadband Plan itself.

I thank the Wireline Bureau staff for their hard work on this item, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to make permanent this important and positive change to our E-Rate rules.