

**CONCURRING STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

Re: *Applications Filed by Qwest Communications International Inc. and CenturyTel, Inc. d/b/a CenturyLink for Consent To Transfer Control, WC Docket No. 10-110*

Today the Commission approves the merger of two companies with a history of providing communications services in rural America. As with every transaction before the Commission, it is our statutory duty to weigh the potential benefits and potential harms of the proposed merger and determine whether it serves the public interest. As we mark the one-year anniversary of the National Broadband Plan, the salient question for me is whether approval of this transaction promotes or hinders the goal of affordable access to high speed, value-laden advanced telecommunications (broadband) service for all our citizens.

We are told that this combination will help expand the benefits of broadband to consumers and communities across the country—that the new CenturyLink will be a stronger company with greater resources to invest in its now significantly expanded service territory. On this score, I believe the applicants' commitments on broadband deployment are a step in the right direction. But the public interest here calls for bold strides, not timid steps. I would have welcomed greater and more explicit commitments to provide broadband access to rural and genuinely unserved areas. It is my hope that the applicants will go above and beyond the pledges made here. I am pleased that the commitments have been expanded to include the provision of broadband service to at least 20,000 community anchor institutions. Unfortunately, in the absence of even rudimentary reporting requirements on deployment to these anchor institutions, we will have to take the company at its word that it is meeting this goal. Measurable results, not "take our word for it" assurances, are what the Commission needs to focus on. They are the coin of the realm.

The merged company is making a significant commitment to promote broadband *adoption* among low-income consumers. Its program rightly targets key obstacles to broadband adoption by providing discounted service, training, and low-cost computer equipment to Lifeline-eligible households. This is a welcome new initiative that holds great promise. The Commission needs to monitor and learn from this effort—which is why it is so important that the applicants will be reporting to the Commission about the progress and success of this program.

Given the scale of this transaction and the size of the combined company, I would have much preferred that our action today included an enforceable commitment to protect consumers' open Internet rights. Absent this, we must be hopeful that truly effective implementation and enforcement of the rules we adopted in December will safeguard consumers online. However, I believe it would have been entirely appropriate to impose a transaction specific condition here and it would make for a more acceptable outcome.

For the reasons outlined above, I limit my support of this transaction to concurrence only.