

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

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*

This Commission has a duty to ensure that the public interest is served as a result of any proposed transfers of control. Today, we find that the merger of CenturyLink and Qwest is in the public interest. Through their commitments, the companies have addressed some of the possible harms that could occur as a result of the transaction, and have pledged to improve broadband deployment in the Qwest territory and broadband adoption by low-income consumers in both Qwest's and CenturyLink's territories. These commitments also include regular reporting so that we can assess the merged company's progress in meeting its deployment and adoption obligations.

There were several issues, however, that I believe should have been more specifically addressed in our review. The companies asserted that post-merger CenturyLink will continue to focus on rural customers, yet the company did not provide sufficient information in the proceeding so that we could ensure that result. While the companies pledge to inform us in their regular reporting the broadband deployment that occurs in rural versus non-rural areas, I would have preferred a specific, verifiable commitment to deploy broadband in unserved, rural areas. I also remain concerned that the merger will change the post-merger company's incentives with respect to its service offerings. In prior mergers, applicants have addressed such incentives through commitments that ensure consumers continue to enjoy nondiscriminatory access to Internet services and applications. Unfortunately, we do not have that backstop here.

The companies' commitment to address the affordability of broadband for consumers throughout its post-merger service territory is a significant step. I commend the companies for developing a plan based on the CenturyLink business model to introduce and manage its adoption program at the local level in order to meet the communities' low-income needs. As a nation, we must address the broadband affordability issue in order to ensure that every American has the opportunity to connect at home. We know that addressing the barriers to adoption may vary based on whether citizens live in urban or rural areas. I appreciate the company's commitment to share its experiences and findings with us so that we can learn more about what works and doesn't work in addressing the adoption issues in its local areas, as well as its commitment to inform us of its program's effectiveness and the improvements it makes to ensure its success. As a result of its dedication to improve services to low-income Americans, the company's experience will inform our decision-making with respect to reforming the Lifeline program and our ongoing consideration of extending that program to include broadband pilot projects for Lifeline-eligible consumers.