

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

Re: *Inquiry Concerning the Deployment of Advanced Telecommunications Capability to All Americans in a Reasonable and Timely Fashion, and Possible Steps to Accelerate Such Deployment Pursuant to Section 706 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, as Amended by the Broadband Data Improvement Act, GN Docket No. 10-159, Seventh Broadband Progress Report and Order on Reconsideration*

With release of this report, it is clear that the Commission is taking seriously its mandate under section 706 of the Telecommunications Act to determine whether advanced telecommunications capability is being made available to all Americans in a reasonable and timely fashion. Congress reaffirmed the importance of this inquiry with the more recent passage of the Broadband Data Improvement Act and the requirement that the Commission make this critical examination into broadband availability each year. Last year, with the Sixth 706 Report, the Commission finally produced a credible effort to deliver a report based on data of the quality and granularity necessary to be truly responsive to Congress.

So I applaud the work of the Bureau and the Chairman to ensure that the Commission is living up to its statutory responsibilities. The findings of the present inquiry, however, give us much less to cheer about. As many as 26 million Americans are unserved by broadband today and at least one-third of Americans do not subscribe to high-speed Internet access service. Every day, broadband becomes more central to the economic and civic life of our nation. Access denied is opportunity denied—we simply cannot afford to have millions of our fellow citizens on the wrong side of a digital divide.

In this year's report, the Commission has gone further than ever before to enhance our analysis of whether and to who broadband remains unavailable. Thanks to the National Broadband Map, for the first time we are able to utilize data on actual deployment—not just the proxy of subscribership information. And we recognize that understanding whether broadband is available, as the statute directs us to do, encompasses whether or not Americans are actually taking broadband service. With the concurrent release today of the International Broadband Data Report, we also have real indicators of how the United States is measuring up against our global competitors in terms of broadband speed, price, deployment and adoption. It is clear that our country still has a long way to go to achieve world-class broadband standing.

To remedy the findings of this Report, the Commission's charge is clear—we must take immediate action so that all Americans are able to participate in the broadband era. We have already teed up many of the issues that are part and parcel of this agenda—now is the time to see them through to swift completion. The Commission has made an unprecedented commitment to reform the Universal Service Fund and Intercarrier Compensation mechanisms in the coming months. This is not something it would be nice for us to do—it is absolutely imperative for us to do. Our current system is patently ill-equipped to assist us in meeting our 21<sup>st</sup> Century broadband goals. It is equally clear how urgently we need a rational system that is more efficiently supporting broadband in rural and high cost areas of the country.

Addressing the barriers that prevent millions of Americans from broadband adoption is just as critical as promoting broadband deployment—and we know that affordability is a big part of that challenge. The Commission has begun the process of reorienting the Lifeline and Linkup programs toward supporting broadband—reforms that cannot arrive fast enough for low-income consumers.

And while today's report is our best effort yet, there are still steps we need to take to ensure that we have even more data to keep current with our statutory obligations. The Commission has teed up

many areas where we can continue to improve our Form 477—ensuring regular and systematic reporting of high-quality broadband data that must inform so many of our Commission endeavors. As the International Broadband Data Report indicates, the Commission is also working hand-in-hand with the State and Commerce Departments and OECD to obtain more globally standardized broadband data—efforts that will promote an even better understanding and comparison of our approaches to broadband with those of our global competitors.

My thanks to the many folks at the Commission who contributed to this year's Report.