

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

Re: *Rural Call Completion*, WC Docket No. 13-39

Whether a telephone call is being made from across the street or across the nation, consumers expect them to be completed. So when calls are not timely received, not only is it frustrating, it is detrimental to those seeking to conduct business, as well as for those who need to convey time-sensitive personal information. Call completion isn't simply about inconvenience for we are hearing about lost business and economic opportunities, of families unable to connect during times of crises, and of very real public safety vulnerabilities. Moreover, consumer confusion abounds when the calling party believes the called party's phone is ringing, as indicated by the fact that the calling party hears the ring numerous times, but the call is never retrieved by a person, voicemail, or answering machine. In fact, this premature ringing is contrary to the industry practice that the audible ringing only occurs when the called party's line is available, and the called party's phone is also ringing.

Since these issues arose, I have been encouraging the Chairman and our staff to take the necessary steps to resolve the rural call completion problems as expeditiously as possible. Indeed, both the Commission and the Wireline Competition Bureau have already taken several important steps to clarify the legal obligations of carriers to complete calls. In our *USF/ICC Transformation Order* released in November 2011, we confirmed that carriers cannot block, choke, or reduce or restrict traffic in any way, and the Bureau followed up with a second Order shortly thereafter, that clarifies that originating carriers can be held liable for knowing that there are completion issues and not correcting them. Moreover, our staff has been collecting real-time information from carriers and consumers to spot patterns and resolve connection issues, and they have been investigating particular carriers and their practices. In my discussions with carriers and consumers, I have been encouraging all those experiencing call completion problems to use the real-time information tools the FCC has made available to help us determine the cause and parties involved in order to resolve individual issues and investigations more quickly.

As evidenced by the unanimous issuance of this NPRM and our prior actions, this Commission takes seriously our responsibility to ensure that wired communications is available to all consumers in the U.S. Our Wireline Competition Bureau and Enforcement Bureau are carrying out our rules and policies, and I am pleased that we are adopting an NPRM that will help us better enforce our call completion requirements. Today's action will help ensure that the Commission has access to the information it needs when investigating complaints about carriers not completing calls in rural areas, and it will incentivize originating carriers to improve call completion performance. Moreover, I am pleased that the NPRM proposes to address consumer confusion, by prohibiting the premature signaling of the audible ringing to the calling party. As soon as the record is complete, we should issue an Order giving us all the tools necessary to enforce our call completion requirements.