

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN TOM WHEELER**

Re: *Ensuring Customer Premises Equipment Backup Power for Continuity of Communications*, PS Docket No. 14-174, *Technology Transitions*, GN Docket No. 13-5, *Policies and Rules Governing Retirement Of Copper Loops by Incumbent Local Exchange Carriers*, RM-11358, *Special Access for Price Cap Local Exchange Carriers*, WC Docket No. 05-25, *AT&T Corporation Petition for Rulemaking to Reform Regulation of Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier Rates for Interstate Special Access Services*, RM-10593.

As technology evolves, the networks we use to communicate with each other are changing. New technology has sparked tremendous innovation, and that is a good thing. Today, the Commission takes important steps to facilitate the transitions to next generation networks by proposing some common-sense, technology-neutral rules designed to protect public safety, consumers, and competition as the transitions move forward.

In particular, the item we adopt today tackles some of the most important policy questions posed by the transitions. For example:

- How do we protect consumers' access to emergency communications during power outages?
- How do we promote greater transparency to the public regarding these transitions, so consumers are sufficiently informed and can make the best decisions for themselves?
- How do we preserve competitive choices in communications services?

The Commission has no higher priority than its public safety responsibilities. We must ensure Americans are confident that the services they rely on to reach first responders are resilient, and that they have reliable access to communications services when they need it most – whether it's during a natural disaster, a power outage or a life-threatening emergency. The proposals we adopt in today's item would establish an "expectations" framework for supplying backup power – consumers need to know what they can expect from their providers, and when they have to step up. This framework is designed to encourage innovative solutions – not mandate specific technologies.

One of the easiest ways for these transitions to falter is if consumers are not adequately informed. Consumers need to have access to accurate information about the choices available to them, as carriers transition to next generation networks. We have seen what happens when consumers are ill-informed and new services do not meet consumers' fundamental needs. The proposals in today's item would ensure that consumers are armed with the information they need to make the best decisions for them.

Finally, promoting and protecting competition through the tech transitions is also critical to ensuring that our nation's networks continue to facilitate economic growth and investment. When service providers compete, customers and businesses large and small win through better prices and improved services. The proposals in today's item would ensure that the competition consumers and businesses enjoy today continue through the transitions.

This is not a matter of old vs. new technologies. Rather, it concerns a simple question: as we reach the tipping point at which the older networks and services are turned off, will the transitions to the next generation networks benefit all Americans or will we allow some to fall through the cracks? I firmly believe that we can facilitate the transitions, even while ensuring that the benefits accrue to everyone.