

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN TOM WHEELER**

Re: *Rates for Interstate Inmate Calling Services*, WC Docket No. 12-375.

As an agency whose core mission is to promote the public interest, the Commission routinely takes actions that impact the lives of ordinary Americans. But few issues have a more direct and meaningful impact on the lives of millions of American than inmate calling reform. With today's action, we will provide material relief to nearly two million families with loved ones behind bars.

To be clear, this is not a niche issue impacting only the families of incarcerated Americans. As Dr. Martin Luther King famously wrote – fittingly in a Birmingham jail cell – “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

To portray this issue as a battle for justice and fairness may sound hyperbolic to some. To those people, I say, “Look at the law.” We have a statutory mandate to ensure that ICS rates are “just, reasonable, and fair.” Fighting for justice and fairness is our job. Today, we are getting the job done.

Inmate calling reform is not only the right thing to do, it's also good policy.

Contact between inmates and their loved ones has been shown to reduce the rate of recidivism, but high inmate calling rates have made that contact unaffordable for many families, who often live in poverty. By adopting tiered rate caps that apply to all interstate and intrastate ICS calls, and limiting and capping runaway ancillary service charges, this item addresses unaffordable ICS rates head on. At the same time, the new caps fully cover the enhanced security requirements of inmate calling and facilitate access to inmate calling for persons with communications disabilities, while allowing providers a reasonable return. This ensures that the rates for phone calls between inmates and their families are *just, reasonable and fair* all around.

Today's actions also help to address a prime example of a market failure. Where, as here, market forces have not been able to discipline costs to consumers, we must shoulder the responsibility of promoting communications services that do not leave the most vulnerable of our population behind.

Perhaps the most important thing people need to understand about today's reforms is that this would not have happened without the leadership of Commissioner Clyburn. This issue was largely ignored by this agency for a decade. She began championing this issue when she arrived as Commissioner in 2009, and when she got the gavel in 2013, she was determined to seize the opportunity to fast track real reform. From the first Order and Further Notice adopted by the Commission under her interim leadership, to the Second Further Notice adopted a year ago, to this item now, Commissioner Clyburn has been the undisputed leader on these issues, as much a champion of a just cause as I have seen. This item is a testament to her strong leadership, the dedication of her staff, notably Rebekah Goodheart, the unflagging advocacy of the Wright Petitioners, as well as the truly tireless efforts of the ICS Team in the Wireline Competition Bureau and Office of General Counsel.