

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL O'RIELLY**

Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90

My heart goes out to the people of Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and all areas that have been impacted by the recent hurricanes. The damage to infrastructure, including telecommunications networks, was profound. I appreciate the efforts of providers who have been working around the clock to restore service under extremely difficult conditions. Indeed, I have heard reports that bringing supplies to the islands, not to mention reaching and repairing networks in areas that remain practically inaccessible and without power, have become herculean tasks.

I therefore support this order, which endeavors to speed the rebuilding of telecommunications networks in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands by providing necessary waivers and the opportunity for carriers in those areas to receive advance payment of high-cost universal service support. I hope these steps will aid providers in restoring important services to consumers on a faster timeframe than would otherwise have occurred. I also appreciate the effort to target the funding where it is needed most. The order requires recipients to coordinate their network repair activities to minimize duplicative coverage, reconnecting as many consumers as possible. Once this has occurred, and I realize that may not be for some time, the Commission should complete its review of ongoing support in these areas and adopt a plan, building on the restoration efforts, to connect the remaining unserved consumers.

Additionally, while it is critical to move forward with this item, I recognize that it will require the use of reserved high-cost funding, at least in the near term, at a time when other high-cost carriers have also requested reserved funding to connect unserved consumers and make broadband more affordable. To provide certainty and stability for these other providers, the Commission should move expeditiously to adopt an interim extension of the high-cost budget and reserve policy.

Finally, I want to recognize the Chairman for his leadership. He quickly pulled together the relevant stakeholders to report on the status of the communications networks, provide necessary waivers, and to facilitate restoration efforts. He has also coordinated closely with our other governmental partners and the public safety community to do what this agency can to aid in the recovery. I commend the Chairman, his team, and the hardworking staff of the agency for their tireless work to help those impacted by the recent hurricanes.