

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

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

Providing broadband to the most remote and rural areas of this country is not for the faint of heart. Consumers and businesses can be spread few and far between. Terrain can be rough and the deployment season can be brutally short. The economics are hard and the business case is not always easy. But it is still a fact that we are stronger when we are connected to one another.

So over the last decade, the Federal Communications Commission set out the modernize its universal service program to assist with the effort to connect all. The agency has taken steps to support a mix of phone and broadband services in rural communities across the country. As a result, the FCC now commits over four and a half billion dollars a year to broadband deployment efforts in these areas. It is by far and away the largest of the agency's universal service efforts.

That's why today's decision is important. Going forward, carriers that accept universal service support to provide broadband will be required to test that their networks actually offer the service they have committed to deliver. This is about accountability. It's important. The FCC must make sure there are measures in place to demonstrate that universal service funding is being used to extend the reach of high-speed service to all. In other words, we have promises to keep.

We also still have work to do.

Two years ago, Representative Frank Pallone called attention to the fact that the FCC's own Inspector General stated that the agency does not have the dedicated resources it needs to police the universal service high cost program. That's a problem. And just one week ago the Inspector General reminded us that this program does not comply with the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Improvement Act.

We need to address these problems—stat. We need confidence in this program. We need to ensure it truly delivers.

Last week, I joined Senator Joe Manchin in West Virginia. We crisscrossed the Mountain State at the peak of its Fall glory. The towns we stopped in were all small, all proud of their history, and all grappling with their futures. Everyone we met expressed concern about how reliable broadband had not yet reached the homes and businesses in their community. They spoke of the connections they were not able to forge, the economic opportunities that had been lost, and the students who struggled with the homework gap. Their frustration was real. Many of them were aggrieved that this agency's maps suggest they have service when they know on the ground, at home and at work, they simply do not.

The trip was a reminder that we have big broadband challenges in this country. We have work to do.

But back to the here and now. This decision is a modest step forward. It brings a new level of accountability to our funding for the high-cost universal service system. It has my support.