
**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *In the Matter of 73 Applicants for Rural Digital Opportunity Fund in Default*

In my statement in 2020, Approving in Part and Dissenting in Part, I cautioned that there “are no do-overs with this money and previous time,” and that the Commission must “hold auction winners accountable.”¹ I was worried that there were “warning signs that we should not ignore” regarding our track record of winners in CAF II defaulting and missing milestones.² And, given the size and scope of RDOF, the stakes were far greater.³ That brings us to today’s action. In this item, we adopt a Notice of Apparent Liability for 73 winning bidders in the RDOF auction that have since defaulted. I support the Commission’s efforts to hold them accountable, to the amount of \$4.3 million in fines. I fervently hope that these service areas, and the households in these communities, get connected through the other currently available broadband deployment programs, including the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) program.

¹ *Rural Digital Opportunity Fund; Connect America Fund*, WC Docket Nos. 19-126 and 10-90, Report and Order, 35 FCC Rcd 686, Statement of Commissioner Geoffrey Starks (2020).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*