

**STATEMENT OF  
CHAIRWOMAN JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Schools and Libraries Universal Support Mechanism*, CC Docket No. 02-6; *Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service*, CC Docket No. 96-45; *Changes to the Board of Directors of the National Exchange Carrier Association, Inc.*, CC Docket No. 97-21, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (February 16, 2023).

If you head straight south from Albuquerque you will eventually reach the Tribal lands of the Pueblo of Isleta. The Pueblo of Isleta is one of 19 Pueblos in New Mexico. Right in the center of the community, with the Sandia Mountains rising in the background, you will find the St. Augustine Church. It is built from field stone and covered in a plaster that has been bleached bright white by the unrelenting sun. The church is a grand monument to culture and community. It's also old; it dates back to 1613. The Pueblo of Isleta have been gathering and worshipping here for centuries.

I visited in December. It was one of the first stops on the Federal Communications Commission's Tribal Libraries Tour. This visit—one of several we have put together—was designed to meet with Native communities and speak to them about resources we have to help bring broadband to Tribal libraries. While in New Mexico, we spent time with the librarian at the Pueblo of Isleta and the librarian at the Pueblo of Laguna, and we also held a roundtable with Tribal leaders at the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center in Albuquerque.

We started this tour because we are on a mission. We want to make sure every Tribal library knows about the E-Rate program. The E-Rate program has been around for a quarter of a century. That is nothing compared to the church in Isleta. But in its time, the program has become a quiet powerhouse, supporting high-speed internet service in libraries nationwide. Those libraries are in big cities and small towns; they are in every corner of the country. So we want to make sure every Tribal library knows about the E-Rate program—and has the opportunity to use it to get online, stay online, and keep their communities connected.

That is why a year ago, the Commission adjusted its E-Rate definition of “library” to ensure that Tribal libraries are included. It used to be under our rules that if a Tribal library was not designated an eligible library by a state agency—a designation that can pose problems of sovereignty—they were unable to participate in the E-Rate program. But the Commission finally fixed it.

This was just the start, because there is more to do to encourage Tribal participation in E-Rate. That is what today's rulemaking is all about. We ask how we can simplify forms and procedures for those on Tribal lands. We seek information about how the funding floor and discount rate function for Tribal applicants and what that means for eligible Tribal libraries and schools. This is important. Because we know that every time a library makes use of E-Rate, it grows incrementally less expensive to bring broadband to nearby homes and businesses. On Tribal lands, which include some of the most remote locations in the country, this really matters. I saw that in New Mexico, but our tour has also included visits to five Tribal libraries in Washington, and next up is an engagement with Alaska Native communities.

This rulemaking also builds on the work we have done to develop the E-Rate Tribal Library Pilot Program to provide one-on-one assistance to new Tribal library applicants interested in applying for E-Rate support.

Like I said, this is a mission. We are going to keep at it and keep finding ways to expand the reach of E-Rate to bring more broadband to more libraries on Tribal lands. Because I can't stop thinking about that church standing tall for centuries at the Pueblo of Isleta. It is a reminder of just how long Native communities have been on this land. They should not be the last to benefit from the opportunities of the digital age.

For this effort, and developing our tour of libraries on Tribal lands, I want to thank Bambi Kraus, who leads our Office of Native Affairs and Policy. I also want to thank so many others who contribute to this work, including Allison Baker, Kate Dumouchel, Jodie Griffin, Trent Harkrader, Hilda Kolawole, Sue McNeil, Molly O'Connor, Johnny Roddy, Johnnay Schrieber, Hayley Steffen, and Adrian Wright from the Wireline Competition Bureau; Edyael Casaperalta, Lloyd Collier, Barbara Esbin, Alejandro Roark, and Jill Springer from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; Malena Barzilai, Richard Mallen, and William Richardson from the Office of General Counsel; Eugene Kiselev and Shane Taylor from the Office of Economics and Analytics; and Cara Grayer, Joy Ragsdale, and Chana Wilkerson from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities.