

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER ANNA M. GOMEZ**

Re: *Reducing Barriers to Network Improvements and Service Changes; Accelerating Network and Service Modernization*, WC Docket Nos. 25-209 and 25-208, Report and Order (March 26, 2026).

Today the Commission takes a meaningful step in modernizing our regulatory framework for the transition away from legacy copper telephone networks to IP-based services.

Our nation's copper infrastructure is aging, costly to maintain, and increasingly vulnerable to theft and natural disaster. The future is IP-based, and our rules should facilitate, not obstruct, carriers' ability to build it.

I also want to recognize that this proceeding generated a serious and substantive record. Carriers, public safety advocates, rural providers, competitive carriers, and consumer organizations each engaged with the hard questions this transition raises. The Commission is better for that engagement, and it shows in this Order. I am pleased to support this item, and I want to thank the Chairman for his willingness to work collaboratively to strengthen the public safety, consumer, and competition safeguards in it.

The transition from legacy copper to IP-based services is not a uniform experience. Those who are most affected are often in rural, remote, tribal, and low-income communities, where alternatives are least mature and the consequences of a gap in service are most severe.

Getting the public safety, consumer protection, and competition pieces right matters enormously, and I am pleased that after working through some of our requested edits, this Order strikes the right balance between moving the transition forward, protecting our nation's 911 network, which has special considerations as the states migrate to next generation 911 services, fostering a robust and competitive market for the services that will replace legacy voice, and ensuring no one is left without a path forward when their service changes.

One concrete example of our collaboration with the Chair's office is worth highlighting. This Order now establishes a centralized docket where consumers can file objections and track concerns related to service discontinuances, and it requires carriers to include notice of that docket and how to access it when notifying customers of a planned discontinuance. It also directs the relevant bureaus to update consumer-facing pages on the Commission's website so that people know how to use the docket, how to file, and how to access the express filing process.

That is a practical, meaningful step. A consumer who receives notice that their existing phone service is going away should also receive clear information about where to go if something goes wrong. This Order now ensures that. Of course, we recognize that not all consumers have ready access to the internet or the resources to navigate these processes on their own. With our assistance, we hope that consumer advocates, community organizations, and state and local partners will help ensure that those consumers are also able to make their voices heard.

I also want to recognize the important role that states play in protecting consumers, safeguarding public safety, and combating fraud. States are often the first line of defense for consumers navigating problems with their communications services, and their authority in these areas is not diminished by today's action. The preemption framework adopted here is appropriately scoped to the discontinuance of interstate and jurisdictionally mixed services, and does not reach state consumer protection laws, state universal service obligations, or state authority over 911 service.

That is the right line to draw. The Commission has seen firsthand how powerful the federal and state partnership can be, including through our memoranda of understanding with state attorneys general

to combat illegal robocalls. That same spirit of partnership will be essential as this transition unfolds, and I look forward to continuing to build on it.

I want to thank the Chairman for the collaborative process through which we were able to work together to ensure consumers are not left behind as this transition unfolds.

And I also want to express my sincere appreciation to the Wireline Competition Bureau for their careful and thorough work on a genuinely complex rulemaking, and for their time walking me and my staff through our questions. I look forward to continuing this work together.