SEPARATE STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER KATHLEEN ABERNATHY

In re: Implementation of 911 Act, The Use of N11 Codes and Other Abbreviated Dialing Arrangements, WT Docket No. 00-110, CC Docket No. 92-105, Memorandum Opinion and Order on Reconsideration and Fifth Report and Order.

Today's order is a significant step towards establishing 911 as the universal emergency number throughout the United States. As Congress directed us through the Wireless Communications and Public Safety Act of 1999, the Commission has crafted a set of flexible rules to govern the transition process for those areas of the country that do not currently utilize 911. This process is, by necessity, a cooperative one. The Commission must work with state governments, the public safety community, carriers, and the public to ensure a seamless and efficient transition. The Commission is committed to serving a key role as a convenor for the key constituencies, a clearinghouse for information and technical expertise, and, if necessary as an enforcer of our rules. However, we cannot do this alone. Carriers must ensure that 911 calls are routed properly and always result in contact with public safety personnel. Perhaps most importantly, this process relies on state and local governments to designate or create public safety answering points or other emergency authorities that will field new 911 calls. It is my strong preference that carriers be told by state and local governments where to route 911 emergency calls. This is by no means a simple process. Many areas of the country have multiple police, fire and rescue jurisdictions; many wireless cell sites cover multiple municipalities, counties, or even states. Moreover, many of the areas that do not yet have 911 services are sparsely populated with public safety services located tens of miles away. These are all daunting challenges, but as a result of meeting them the American people will soon enjoy the safety and security of knowing that anytime of day, anywhere across the USA, help is only three digits away.