

**JOINT STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONERS MICHAEL J. COPPS AND KEVIN J. MARTIN**

Re: Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service; Implementation of the Local Competition Provisions of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Order on Reconsideration, CC Docket Nos. 96-45 & 96-98

We write separately to express our support for the Commission's efforts to reduce its backlog of outstanding petitions. Clearing this backlog enables this Commission to work from a clean slate, allowing us to make decisions on current matters faster and thereby promote regulatory stability. We thus commend the Chairman for making the elimination of outstanding petitions a priority.

At the same time, we recognize that the means by which this Order reduces backlog, although necessary in this instance, is far from ideal. In this Order, we dismiss petitions for reconsideration that went unresolved for such a long time that we found it necessary to require parties affirmatively to indicate whether they still wished to pursue them. Allowing petitions to become moot solely due to the Commission's failure to act is unfortunate, at best. More problematically, the process used here raises the possibility that a party may fail to indicate its intention to pursue its petition only because it failed to receive notice of the Commission's intentions.

Nevertheless, we vote for this item because the Commission conducted substantial outreach to ensure that parties – and in particular non-traditional stakeholders that may not have representatives in Washington – had actual notice before a petition was dismissed. Indeed, additional outreach at our request determined that several parties whose petitions were going to be dismissed in fact still wished to pursue them. Those petitions have now been removed from the list of petitions we dismiss today. We commend the Commission for undertaking these efforts. In the future, we hope that actions such as today's order are not needed. But if they are, we expect that the Commission will undertake the kind of substantial outreach efforts it undertook here.