

**Statement of  
Commissioner Michael J. Copps**

*Re: Application by Verizon New England, Inc., Bell Atlantic Communications, Inc. (d/b/a Verizon Long Distance), NYNEX Long Distance Company (d/b/a Verizon Enterprise Solutions), Verizon Global Networks, Inc., and Verizon Select Services Inc., for Authorization to Provide In-Region InterLATA Services in Vermont (CC Docket No. 02-7)*

I commend the Vermont Board and Verizon for the steps they have taken to open the local markets in Vermont to competition. Today's decision demonstrates once again that consumers in rural states can benefit from the expanded competition contemplated by the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

The major issue in this proceeding has been the pricing of network elements, and in particular the rates for unbundled switching. The Commission grants this application due to the unique circumstances here. In this instance, opponents did not raise these issues with the Vermont Board in the underlying proceeding, have not subsequently asked the Vermont Board to reevaluate the switching rates – notwithstanding the expressed willingness of the Vermont Board to do so – and have not presented adequate evidence in this proceeding to demonstrate that the Vermont Board committed a clear error. Under these procedural circumstances, I agree that we should grant this application. Importantly, however, the Commission makes clear in this Order that the pricing decision does not serve as precedent for other section 271 applications. These issues may be presented in future applications and I look forward to addressing them there on the basis of a fuller record.

In addition, we should remain mindful that the grant of a section 271 application is not the end of the road. This Commission and our state colleagues must remain vigilant to ensure that parties meet their obligations under the statute. By taking this shared responsibility seriously, we can ensure that consumers continue to reap the benefits of enduring competition as envisioned by Congress in the 1996 Act.