

**SEPARATE STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

*RE: Extending Wireless Telecommunications Services to Tribal Lands, Third Report and Order (WT Docket No. 99-266).*

The FCC has a special responsibility to increase telephone penetration rates in tribal lands. Access to telecommunications services on tribal lands continues to lag significantly behind other parts of the country despite our current efforts. Because we must work harder to erase this gap, I support increasing the tribal lands bidding credit and adjusting our eligibility criteria so that bidding credits are available for spectrum associated with tribal lands where penetration rates are lower than 85 percent rather than 70 percent. We must remember that penetration rates are still far lower than these levels in many tribal areas. I hope that these two changes make serving tribal areas more attractive to bidders and result in increased service.

I am disappointed, however, that we have not found a way to make bidding credits available in adjacent, non-tribal areas. This is a change that both wireless companies and tribal organizations have indicated could make a difference. This issue has lingered too long, and we must strive to work with tribal representatives and industry experts to find creative solutions for this and other challenges. Nonetheless, this Order is another step forward, so I support it.