

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90, *ETC Annual Reports and Certifications*, WC Docket No. 14-58, *Developing a Unified Intercarrier Compensation Regime*, CC Docket No. 01-92.

For too long rural consumers seeking to get standalone broadband service have been told that in order to do so they would have to pay for a voice line in addition to broadband—or worse, that such an offering is simply not available. Sensing that they were getting the raw end of the bargain, rural consumers have complained to their providers, complained to the Better Business Bureau, and complained to this Commission.

Today we heed their call. This Order takes steps to correct the strange confluence of history and law that produced this situation. As a result, rural consumers finally will be able to order standalone broadband service—just like their urban counterparts. I fully support this aspect of today’s decision. In fact, I believe this result is overdue.

This Order also updates other aspects of universal service policy. It provides rate-of-return carriers serving rural communities a new option to receive model-based universal service funding, puts in place additional measures to keep our universal service program fiscally accountable, and updates the rate of return used in our program to better reflect modern commercial reality. I support these changes, too.

For rate-of-return carriers, these changes come not a moment too soon. These are companies that are deeply invested in rural America, but they face daunting challenges bringing high-speed services to some of the most remote and difficult to serve areas in the country. So we need to monitor the reforms we put in place in order to ensure that they result in real progress and bring broadband to hard-to-reach places. We also need to make sure that the places left out of the reforms in this Order—including Alaska and Tribal Lands—are not forgotten. The connectivity needs in these locations are profound. We owe it to their residents to act as quickly as possible.

Finally, it is important to recognize that over time our high-cost universal service policies have grown increasingly complex. Our work here is no exception. I worry that this complexity can deny carriers dependent on the universal service system the certainty they need to confidently invest in their network infrastructure. Nonetheless, today’s Order represents a step forward—especially with respect to standalone broadband. But looking ahead I am hopeful that when new opportunities arise to simplify our universal service rules in a manner that is good for rural consumers and bound to inspire investment—we will seize them.