

**Statement of
Commissioner Michael J. Copps**

Re: Annual Assessment of the Status of Competition in the Market for the Delivery of Video Programming

The Report we initiate today, required by Congress, serves as the factual foundation for Commission decisions and provides the Legislative branch with information to inform the national policy debate. It is therefore extremely important that the Commission has the best possible data available to it when drafting this Report.

I expressed concerns last year that our Report suffered from both limited data and inadequate analysis. At a time of significant increases in cable rates year after year, I felt that Congress and American consumers deserved a better effort. Cable rates have soared by more than 50 percent since passage of the 1996 Act, with substantially higher increases for customers in some areas.

Today, the Commission commits to undertake a more pro-active and comprehensive information-gathering effort for this year's Report. In addition, the Commission indicates that, if necessary to carry out its statutory duties, it will consider an NPRM to obtain better data. Our analysis can be only as good as the data going into it. So we first need fuller data, both from within and from our stakeholders. Absent detailed comments from a wide range of sources, the Report will again fall short of its potential. So I'm asking here for more and better input from outside the Commission and then an intensified effort from within. Down that road we fulfill our mission to be the government's expert agency.

Thanks to the Bureau for working to enhance this item.